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Tony & Co. 36.

1875.

The 6th picture in the right side
of the first floor of the house where
we were born. It is a picture of
the room where we were born.





in 1834

THE HAMILTONS:

OR,

OFFICIAL LIFE IN 1830.

BY MRS. GORE,

AUTHOR OF

"MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS," "CECIL," ETC.

"But I confess that, after I had been too copious in talking of my own beloved country, of our trade, our wars by sea and land, and parties in the state, the prejudices of the king of Brobdignag's education prevailed so far that he could not forbear taking me up in his right hand, and stroking me gently with the other ; asking me, after a hearty fit of laughing, whether I was a Whig or Tory ? Then, turning to his first minister, he observed how paltry a thing was human grandeur, which could be mimicked by such contemptible insects as I!" — *Gulliver's Travels*.

LONDON :

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET ;
AND BELL & BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH.

1850.

LONDON :
SPOTTISWOODES and SHAW,
New-street-Square.

THE HAMILTONS.

CHAPTER I.

Such as I oft have chanced to espy,
Lost in the dreary shades of dull obscurity.

SHENSTONE.

SCARCELY a town in England but possesses its “coigne of vantage.” Brighton prides itself on its royal marino; — Oxford on its university; — Birmingham on its factories; — every place on its something.

Laxington, a neat obscure borough, some ten miles East of Northampton, had long been accustomed to pique itself on its gentility! — A coterie of maiden and widow ladies, whose domiciles overlooked its grass-grown market-place, were no less thankful to Providence for sparing them the strikes, frame-breakings, and incendiарisms which agitate a manufacturing population, than to government for securing them from the terrors of a garrison. No “captain bold,” disturbed *their* “country quarters;” — no steam-engine smoked to defile their snowy dimity. Though a rapid stream gurgled through the Laxington meadows, so little were the inhabitants disposed to speculation, that a solitary corn-mill alone enlivened the banks. — Not a sound was to be heard there on the stillest day,

but the dinner-bells of Weald Park and Everleigh Hall ; two family seats of some mark and distinction, within a mile's distance from the town.

The thrones and dominions established in authority over the Laxingtonians, were in fact deeply interested in maintaining their self-satisfied mediocrity. The borough, close as a confessor, was the property of the Earl of Tottenham ; whose agent (a wealthy attorney fattened upon the office) was careful not to augment the revenues of his employer by the sale of a single inch of ground calculated for building leases or the manufacture of manufactories ; while the vicar, another delegate of his lordship, was no less assiduous to repress the institution of any society or association tending towards the spirit of enlightenment so active and so mischievous elsewhere. A single Sunday-school sufficed the ignorance of the poor ; — a single whist-club the social wants of the rich. The names of Bell and Lancaster were eschewed as an abomination. A proposal for a Reading-Room was denounced as Jacobinical, and of mischievous intent. The vicar and the attorney — nay ! even the attorney's sister, Pen. Smith, the most active-minded inhabitant of the place, — were content with Lord Tottenham's second day's Courier and the weekly intelligence of the County Chronicle. Newspapers and magazines would have been productive of political discussions ; — political discussions, of squabbles among neighbours hitherto united. Things were better as they were. The borough could not be kept too quiet ; or the Earl's deputed be too watchful against innovation.

In this desire for tranquillity, the place and the people appeared to coincide. The very chimes of the church got out of order, and were condemned. No whereabout for a rookery was to be found among the

pollard willows, flourishing in green luxuriance in the circumjacent meadows. In the High-Street, as in a Cathedral close, the mere sound of a knife-grinder's wheel seemed to impress the inhabitants with terror; and the traveller, pausing to contemplate the white walls of Laxington, lying compact and motionless amid its verdant pastures, was apt to compare it to a well-fed cat, purring itself to sleep in the sunshine.

The Laxingtonians would, however, have been less vain of their gentility and of possessing no manufacture save that of members of parliament, had not the deficiency been compensated by what is provincially called "an excellent neighbourhood." Though Lord Tottenham and his agent were able to fix the limits of the borough, by saying, "Hitherto shalt thou build, and no further"—they had no control over the pleasing fact that five grooms in livery made their daily appearance at the post-office, with the letter bags of Stoke Park and Everleigh Hall; of old Forbes of the Manor-House, Lady Berkely of Green-Oak Cottage, and Mrs. Warren of the Grove.—Without interest or occupation of their own, the tabby coterie of the market-place, headed by Pen. Smith the attorney's sister, and Mrs. Mangles the vicar's lady, creating for themselves an excitement out of the pains and pleasures, the sayings and doings, of these wealthier neighbours, the Tritons of their shallow waters, fancied *they* were enjoying the amusements of London, whenever Lady Ashley of Stoke went to town for the season; and reformed their fashions after the model of Mrs. Cadogan, whenever the family arrived at Everleigh from the continent.—All the affairs of the neighbourhood within ten miles round were familiarly discussed in their petty parliament;—the gossip of which was as impertinent, as personal, and almost as

prosy, as the debates of other representative assemblies.

A single circumstance had long sat heavy on the soul of Laxington!—Weald Park, the prettiest residence in its genteel neighbourhood and the nearest to its inquisition, had been long unoccupied. Having fallen to the inheritance of a young nobleman, a pluralist in country seats, who possessed parks in half the shires of the empire, its shrubberies had been allowed to run to waste, till the carriage road afforded a very advantageous sample of Northamptonshire pasturage; when lo! one fine spring evening, Miss Pen. dropped in to tea at the vicarage, with intelligence that a travelling carriage was stopping at the Tottenham Arms, with “a family from town, come down to view Weald Park!”

“Weald Park to be let?” It was something of a degradation to the gentility of the neighbourhood;—and the vicar expressed himself severely against the immorality of young Lord Lancashire, on learning that the loss of thirty thousand pounds on the turf was the immediate cause. But he spoke with due hesitation. For it was the first time, during a long life, that Dr. Mangles had ventured to find fault with a lord; and he was duly aware that the turf is a privilege of all but right divine, to majesties, royal highnesses, and peers of the realm. Nay, he almost forgave the noble delinquent, on finding that the new tenant of Weald was not only one of his Majesty’s ministers, but the intimate friend of his right honourable patron, the Earl of Tottenham. The fact was clearly ascertained. Mr. Smith had been written to—Mr. Smith’s opinion of the manor ascertained. The lease, for fourteen years, was already in progress of engrossment!—

The value of such an accession to the great talkers

and little doers of Laxington, may readily be conceived. Their neighbourly sympathies had long required extension. Lady Ashley, the fair widow of Stoke, was almost always resident on the continent. The Cadogans of Everleigh were fonder of London or Brighton, than of their hereditary oaks. Old Forbes was getting into his dotage,—his only son, a rising lawyer, rarely seen in Northamptonshire. And although Lady Berkely of Green-Oak, and her two handsome daughters, were of inestimable value as heroines of their romance, not a single man of fortune was to be found in the county worthy the attention of either. When it appeared, therefore, that Mr. Hamilton, the new tenant of Weald, had a son and daughter of an age to form alliances in the neighbourhood, Lord Lancashire stood acquitted. They rejoiced to hear of their new neighbour's man-cook, and were proud of his groom of the chambers. But the prospect of a match for Marcia Berkely, and—who knows?—perhaps a wife for Bernard Forbes,—was fairly worth them both. Pen. Smith walked over to Green-Oak under an umbrella the following morning, during a heavy shower, to acquaint Lady Berkely with the news.

But her ladyship was not the woman to be startled into a confession of satisfaction.

“These Hamiltons will not be here till September,” she observed, with ostentatious equanimity. “I trust we shall then be at Worthing. If not, I shall have no objection to visit them. Though brought up a staunch Whig, I never allow family politics to interfere with neighbourly sociability. Mr. Hamilton, Tory as he is, may be a very worthy man!”

Her pretty daughters, Marcia and Susan, well aware that this *tirade* was intended only to mark their

mother's sense of superiority to the Smiths, and the patron of the Smiths, Lord Tottenham, smiled over their embroidery : being almost as sensible as the coterie of Laxington to the advantage of having young and cheerful neighbours at Weald Park.

CHAP. II.

S'il n'y avait que trois hommes au monde, l'un ferait la cour à l'autre, l'appellerait Monseigneur, et ces deux unis forceraient le troisième à travailler pour eux. — P. L. COURIER.

THE summer was a tedious summer at Laxington. Never before had the succession of hollyhocks to roses been watched for with so much anxiety in the gardens of the vicarage, or of Attorney Smith : for the months of July and August had brought exciting tidings of the merits of their expected neighbours. Already, the name of Hamilton seemed to belong to them ; and, for the first time, they invested a portion of their sympathies in the vicissitudes of official life. Their interest in the proceedings of parliament was no longer restricted to the "ayes" and "noes" of the honourable members by whom it was Lord Tottenham's pleasure they should be represented. They already loved to read, in their stale edition of the Courier, that "Mr. HAMILTON had said a few words inaudible in the gallery :" or that "THE RIGHT HON. GEORGE HAMILTON had entertained the Lord Chancellor and a distinguished party at dinner, at his mansion in Spring Gardens."

For the Right Honourable George was the first denizen of their genteel neighbourhood who had ever

possessed "a mansion" in town!—Lady Ashley had only rooms at an hotel; and even the Cadogans were content with a ready furnished house in Brook Street! The attorney noticed with whom he paired off, and was curious touching every petition he presented. He was elected an F.R.S.; and Dr. Mangles affected a sudden ardour in the cause of science: and when Miss Hamilton was quoted by the County Chronicle (in an extract from the Morning Post), as having danced at Carlton House with some scion of foreign royalty, Lady Berkely made secret reference to the Almanack of Saxe Gotha.—Nothing was thought of but the Hamiltons!

The auspicious moment approached. The new furniture was come—the new people were coming. Ponderous waggons, bearing the names of Gillow and Co., were duly watched into the park. A caravan of kitchen-maids and laundry-maids followed; and, at length, a post-chaise containing a detachment of the steward's room, made its appearance. The tranquil High Street was now in an uproar; Pen. Smith almost in hysterics. Things were evidently to be done at Weald on a very different scale from the meagre gentility of the Warrens, Forbes's, and other notables of the district.—The butchers and bakers were of opinion that the Right Hon. George might do more for them in a month than the Earl of Tottenham in a year. It was true, his lordship obliged them, by putting their supernumerary sons into the excise; and had once procured the reprieve of a felon, who happened to have been born in Laxington. But he never came among them—never bought their cheap calicoes or genuine fish-sauces.—*They* swallowed his two members; he swallowed nothing of theirs in return!

On this hint, the High Street cleaned its windows;

the haberdashers festooned their shops with less faded ribbons ; the grocer blockaded his doorway with a fresh hogshead of Muscovado sugar ; and the apothecary refreshed his blue and red bottles with new infusions of indigo and cochineal. “The cry was still — ‘they come !’”

At last, the creaking of the turnpike gate at the entrance of the High Street, brought every head to every window. The unobstructed ways of the town left them only a moment for observation. But when the dust and the rolling of the wheels subsided, there was, evidently, a little disappointment ! Instead of the crimson liveries and double crest they had anticipated, the Right Hon. George’s attendants were a valet and a lady’s maid, yawning in the rumble. His barouche was dingy brown. His daughter wore a green veil.— There was nothing at all sublime or beautiful in the accessories. The Mangleses and Smiths accordingly determined to lose no time in paying their respects to their new neighbours. They anticipated much pleasure in doing the honours of Laxington and its vicinity ; and fancied themselves of as much consequence to the Hamiltons, as the Hamiltons to *them*.

What therefore was the surprise of the unsophisticated vicar on visiting Weald with the intentions of a cicerone the following day, to observe the right honourable stranger as completely installed in his Northamptonshire library, as if he had never franked a letter in any other apartment of the realm ; or Attorney Smith’s and Miss Pen.’s indignation, on finding themselves welcomed with the mechanical smile of official patronage, to a spot they in some degree regarded as their own. The aborigines of Laxington had nothing to suggest, — to hint, — to impart.

The Hamiltons were as completely established as the oldest inhabitant;—were intimate with Lord Lancashire, his dowager mother, and the lord lieutenant of the county—(three occult objects of veneration in the little borough);—insolently familiar with the great name of the great Tottenham family, and condescendingly cognizant of Lady Ashley and the Cadogans of Everleigh Hall!

They knew everything, in short, of the neighbourhood, which they seemed to think worth knowing; and Mr. Hamilton was not only already completely master of the house—(to which the Smiths had so long asserted a claim by walking in its groves and pil-laging its gardens)—but doing the honours of its hospitality to a large party of friends, who had arrived late the preceding night, to open the shooting season!

Instead of doing business after the pottering style of Mr. Forbes of Manor-House and the other proprietors of the five letter bags, Mr. Hamilton was one of those who look upon country seats as places where official men do congregate during the holidays, to eat each other's venison, drink each other's claret, make love to each other's wives, and form plans for the arrangements of the ensuing session.

“I am afraid these new people will prove too *fine* for us,” observed Lady Berkely to her eldest daughter, on returning from her first visit to Weald Park. “Unless I am much mistaken, the Hamiltons will be no acquisition to the neighbourhood; but import their pleasures and guests from London.”

“Mr. Hamilton appears to be an agreeable, well-bred man,” said Susan Berkely, who had accompanied her mother in the visit.

“I call no man well-bred,” replied Lady Berkely, “who allows a visitor at his house to feel *de trop*,

His manner to-day was so very absent, as to leave me no alternative but to ring for the carriage."

"And Miss Hamilton?" inquired Marcia, anxiously.

"Very pretty,—very lively,—very elegant," replied her sister. "One of those favourites of fortune whose destiny has never known a care, or whose countenance, a cloud."

"What an egotist!" murmured Marcia. "But was she sociable?—had you much conversation?"

"She seemed inclined to be chatty. But a Lady Leighton, and a gentleman staying in the house, were seated between us: and they all laughed and talked together about things and people with whom they seemed to think all the world must be acquainted, but of whom we know nothing."

"Which confirms Bernard Forbes's observation that the Exclusives (and I have a presentiment these Hamiltons will *prove* Exclusives!) fancy there exists but one circle in the world; that which they unite to form round their idol—Fashion."

"Vastly impertinent, in a nobody, like Mr. Bernard Forbes, to give his opinion upon the proceedings of the higher orders of society!" cried Lady Berkely: who, as grand-daughter to a Scottish peer and widow of an Irish baronet, had hitherto assumed to herself the representation and championship of the aristocracy, in the neighbourhood of Laxington. "What should either he, or you, know about Exclusivism?—The truth is, these Hamiltons are mere government people; — *parvenus* probably, — like most of the Tory party. And, though I know the world too well to allow family politics to interfere with my neighbourly feelings, I own I expect little from the new people."

"Hamilton is not exactly a plebeian name!" observed Marcia, calmly.

"*The* Hamiltons are all in opposition," observed her mother. "I *ought* to know. Brought up a staunch Whig, I am tolerably *au fait* to the politics of our leading families. Pray, Susan, what was the name of that over-rouged woman, who sat near you on the sofa?"

"Leighton, Mamma;—a Lady Leighton!"

"Leighton?—No such name in the peerage!—Give me LODGE from the book-rack."

And while her ladyship proceeded to pore over the pages of a volume which opened mechanically at "BERKELY (Sir Edward), a minor," the elder daughter pursued her inquiries about their new neighbours.

"Did Miss Hamilton mention her brother? Pen. Smith informs me she *has* a brother."

"He is on the Rhine. She said he would probably visit Northamptonshire for pheasant shooting."

"What active people!—They deign to patronise the country only, when something is to be done."

"I think we shall find them more amusing than most of our old-fashioned, tea-drinking neighbours," observed Susan.

"So much the better," replied Marcia, ironically. "I am prepared to think wonders of them, and to discard all my old friends without loss of time. I doubt whether I shall venture to nod to Pen. Smith tomorrow, after church. As to Mrs. Warren, already I blush for her old black cloak!"

"Pray let me hear no more of such nonsense!" interrupted Lady Berkely; whose researches in the Baronetage having brought to light nothing more distinguished under the head of "Leighton," than "(Sir Joseph) attorney-general," had considerably abated in her respect towards the circle at Weald. "We have troubled ourselves a great deal too much about

these people. It is time we should return to what we were before the Hamiltons were heard of in Northamptonshire."

CHAP. III.

All tongues speak of him ; and the bleared sights
Are spectacled to see him. Bulks, windows,
Are smothered up, leads filled, and ridges horsed,
In earnestness to look on him.

SHAKSPEARE.

BUT this was impossible. As well might Lady Berkely have required

The rose to shut, and be a bud again,

as for the Laxingtonians to retrograde into their obscure barbarism. Scarcely had the Hamiltons been settled a week at Weald Park, when a total revolution occurred in the moral character of the neighbourhood! A new standard of merit was erected in the market place ; a new order of opinion adopted in the vicarage coterie. Mrs. Cadogan of Everleigh, who had long constituted Penelope Smith's ideal of a fashionable flirt, had subsided into a dowdy ; while Lady Ashley of Stoke, who was suspected of an occasional touch of rouge, was no longer whispered against by Mrs. Mangles as a second Jezebel!

These ladies, who were passing the summer together at Spa, had, as yet, no suspicion that their kingdom and ill-name were taken from them. But Lady Berkely, who was on the spot, — *poor* Lady

Berkely, whose pony-chaise crept humbly through the turnpike gate which had learned to revolve upon its hinges for the carriages of earls, marquises, and even dukes, — Lady Berkely was a fallen star! The Laxingtonians had begun to discover that there were lords in the land independent of the all-puissant Earl of Tottenham ; and Pen. Smith saw clearly that the pompous widow of Green-Oak Cottage was far from the High-mightiness she had assumed herself to be. No distinction had been made in her favour by the Privy Councillor. The pine-apple condescendingly despatched from Weald to the Cottage, had been preceded by a haunch of venison to Vicar Mangles, and a leash of partridges to Attorney Smith ; and, though Lady Berkely insinuated that Mr. Hamilton's neglect arose from his ignorance of her connection with Lord Cairnmarlerock, and her too frank exposition of the whiggism of her education, the shrewd Penelope was of opinion that he cared nothing at all about the matter.

And she was right. Mr. Hamilton, the new proprietor of Weald, was essentially an official man ; — had been born in place, bred in place, nurtured on place. His father had lived and died in Scotland Yard with the word “ salary,” hovering upon his lips ; and young George, at five-and-twenty the private secretary of a public minister, trusting to be at five-and-fifty a minister with secretaries of his own, regarded the treasury as his patrimony, the duties of office as the virtues of his vocation, and the stability of Tory ascendancy as the immutability of the universe. — The very soul within him was steeped in officiality !

From the moment a man of ordinary faculties is thrown into the vortex of official life, all trace of his individual nature is lost for ever. Thenceforward, he

exists but as a cipher of the national debt,—a fraction of administration,—a leaf upon the mighty oak we claim as the emblem of Britain. There is no mistaking an official man. All trades and professions have their slang and charlatanism; and that of a privy councillor, though of a higher tone, is a no less inveterate jargon than that of a horse dealer. Long practice had rendered this technical dialect a mother-tongue to Mr. Hamilton. His arguments abounded in ministerial mysticism;—his jokes were parliamentary;—his notes of invitation, formal as official documents. His anecdotes were authenticated by dates; he spoke as if before a committee, or under the influence of the whipper-in. He scarcely knew how to leave a room, without the ceremony of pairing off, or to hazard an opinion, lest he should be required to justify it to his party!

To such a man, the incidents of private life were of trivial account. His friends might die when it suited them. Mr. Hamilton was too much accustomed to see places filled up, to fancy any loss irreparable; and, as to births and marriages, what were they but drawbacks on the velocity of the great vehicle of public business?—All was activity with him and about him. No time for pause, or prose, or deliberation. The business of the state, like that of the sun, *must* march; and Hamilton was steady at his post. In the utmost relaxation of private life, it was evident that one eye and one compartment of his mind, were engaged elsewhere;—entangled in some labyrinth of cabinet chicane, or devising some project for the glorification of government. He was, in fact, indispensable to his party; not as a man of genius, but as a man of business.

Such was the individual to whom Lady Berkely had intended to play the fine lady, and Penelope Smith the

sociable neighbour. Happily, he was unconscious of their plans of patronage. He had not a thought to waste upon them, except as part and parcel of the parliamentary estate of the Earl of Tottenham; who, as a man of some account in the Tory party, was to be conciliated, even through the medium of the wooden puppets of his borough.

“I am afraid we must have these Laxington people here to dinner,” said he to his daughter, shortly after Lady Berkely’s visit to Weald. “You can manage it so that the moon will carry them all off by eleven. And the sooner you send out your invitations the better; for your brother writes me word he will be here by Thursday, and that he brings down William Tottenham.”

“William Tottenham?” ejaculated Lady Leighton (while Julia Hamilton, too prudent to ejaculate anything, went off to write her notes of invitation, and to conceal her delight at the intelligence.) “What has *he* to do in Northamptonshire? — To execute the repairs of his father’s crazy popularity?”

“Too *nonchalant*, I fear, for any such arduous employment!” observed Mr. Hamilton.

“A *nonchalant* man is the last person to be made available in a country-house,” retorted Lady Leighton; “and we are sadly in want of somebody who could be trusted in our morning room, to read to us while we pretend to work; — a man who would run over the newspapers and reviews and new novels, with tact to skip what ought to be skipped, and insist upon what ought to be remembered.”

“A man, in short, uniting the qualifications of a gentleman, a scholar, and a tame cat?”

“Precisely!”

“And pray is William Tottenham coming here to

fill these functions, at your ladyship's desire?" inquired Mr. Hamilton, watching the expression of her countenance.

"My ladyship's?" cried Lady Leighton, in amazement. "What out of-the-way notions enter the heads of you official gentlemen!—Engrossed, heart and soul, during the session, you make your appearance at the end like a bevy of owls emerging into the sunshine; mistaking one person for another, and falling into the most ludicrous mistakes.—What have I to do with William Tottenham?"

"Then it must be Julia who attracts him to Weald!" exclaimed Mr. Hamilton. "He would never desert such shooting as that at Tottenham Park, without some object in view. How absurd of Augustus to invite him!—A younger son without a guinea!—How shall I get rid of him!—"

"Write at once to his father!" said Lady Leighton, with a significant smile. "The match would suit none of you; and you could candidly explain to Lord Tottenham,—but no," cried she, checking herself; "adroit as you are at explanation, I admit that candour, in *this* instance, would be difficult. How could you invest in phrase polite, 'My dear lord, your political friendship is invaluable; but a family connection between us is out of the question. We could not make up six scruples of principle between us, or the young couple five hundred a year!'"—

"Have you quite done?" inquired Mr. Hamilton, coolly,—aware that in her rage for saying witty things, his friend, Sir Joseph's wife, cared not whose feelings she offended.

"Not half!—I am composing a postscript to inform Lord Tottenham that his son's pretensions are the more impertinent, because it is well known you have

bespoken for your daughter, the hand of your ward, Lord Claneustace."

"Am I indebted to your friend Colonel Eardley for that insinuation?" retorted Mr. Hamilton, with some bitterness.

"Colonel Eardley?—oh! are you *there!*!" cried Lady Leighton, leaning back on the sofa to admire the angry countenance of her host. "Is there so much micing malicio in you?"

"Mere innocent pleasantry!"

"When great men condescend to pleasantries, I have seldom found them innocent," replied the lady, with a laugh. "They play the fool so cleverly that the *actor* is always visible. You have heard, I see, of my flirtation with George Eardley; and will probably retort upon my adage, that 'when fine ladies condescend to flirtations, you have seldom found them innocent;' as if there were something in the atmosphere of the high places of the land which tended to aggravate the disorder! — Fie! fie!"

"Let us drop, I beseech you, my dear Lady Leighton, this absurd discussion," cried Hamilton, amazed by her *sang-froid*.

"Beseech me no such thing, — it amuses me extremely. You remind me of the blockheads in the House, who cry 'Order,' the moment a question comes to be fairly discussed. But set your mind at ease, both as regards *my* reputation and Sir Joseph's peace of mind. He knows that I was not born or educated for the vocation of a woman of fashion, to which his professional elevation has condemned me; — and forgives his wife for being stupid enough to prefer the society of an agreeable man, always in good spirits and good humour, to that of a tribe of artificial women, who will not even admit me to their presence till they have

composed their complexions and tempers for the day. My husband perceives that I render the whole Opera-house a witness of my *tête-à-têtes*;—and we often laugh together at the malicious interference of those who, having loved one or two of their neighbours more than is good for them, make war to the knife upon the reputations of the rest !”

“ An admirable definition of scandal ! ” cried Hamilton, anxious to appease her wrath. “ But I want to ask your advice with respect to Julia and William Tottenham.—Do you suppose my daughter really attached to this empty-headed fellow ? ”

“ I hope not ; for it is my earnest wish she should marry Lord Claneustace. No thanks ! —It would suit me to pass at least three weeks at Claneustace Court, every autumn.”

“ *That* you might manage with any other marchioness ! —Allow me still to believe in your goodwill towards my daughter.”

“ You are right,” cried Lady Leighton, in a more natural tone. “ *I am* attached to Julia ; and my interest in her welfare leads me to regret that you have shown so little knowledge of human nature as to bring her up in familiar intimacy with Lord Claneustace. She looks upon him as her brother ; and falls in love with William Tottenham, who has nothing on earth to recommend him but white teeth, a good tailor, and consummate assurance.”

“ What is to be done ! ” ejaculated the Privy-Councillor ; sadly to seek in the presidency of his family politics.

“ William Tottenham is a foolish flirting fellow. Invite some of the pretty women of the neighbourhood to meet him.—Mrs. Cadogan is ——”

“ Abroad ! ”

“Lady Ashley?”—

“At Paris.”

“What is the name of that charming girl who called here with her mother the other morning?”

“The very person!—Julia, my love,” continued the statesman, addressing his daughter, who just then entered the room with her notes of invitation in her hand,—“We must put off the Laxington people for the present. But write a very civil letter to Lady Berkely, and invite her to dine here with her two daughters, on Saturday next.”

Such was the origin of the first overtures of civility between Green-Oak Cottage and Weald Park.

CHAP. IV.

La complaisance d'un homme que l'on traitait d'*Excellence*, chatouilla son orgueil et remplit son esprit de fastueuses chimères.
— DIABLE BOITEUX.

THE object of Mr. Hamilton's hollow hospitality was a lady of considerable pretensions, who had been left a widow early in life, by the death of Lieutenant-General Sir Clement Berkely, under circumstances of peculiar interest and distinction, in the peninsular campaign. The family estates of the general, of no very considerable extent, were so strictly entailed on their infant son, that her pension and jointure, united, scarcely sufficed to maintain her in the sphere of life to which she was accustomed. Yet, sanguine of improving her condition by means of a second marriage, Lady Berkely persisted in retaining her house in town; on pretext that the education of her daughters

demanded the sacrifice. Handsome and heartless, she had passed the prime of life in finessing and disappointment ; exceeding her income, and manœuvring with bolder and bolder stratagems for a better establishment : till, at length, the accomplishment of her elder daughter's seventeenth year found her still a widow ; in dudgeon and in debt !

And thus, the superficial education bestowed upon Marcia and Susan, avowedly with the view of qualifying them to shine in the gay world, was rendered fruitless. No sooner were they of an age to appear in London society, than Lady Berkely, in penance for her career of extravagance, was compelled to retire into the country. Having lived at the rate of two thousand a-year, when she had scarcely fifteen hundred, "in order to keep up appearances for the sake of her family," she was now obliged to vegetate in the provinces on a thousand,—for the sake of her creditors. This important measure being with some difficulty arranged between her ladyship and her ladyship's man of business, young Sir Edward was dispatched to Berlin, with a private tutor ; and the girls were no further admitted into her confidence, than by a hint that "the state of the times required them to economize for a few years in the country." As if the state of the times had any thing in common with Lady Berkely's coachmaker's and jeweller's bills ! —

Away they all went into Northamptonshire, to form an episode in the genteel neighbourhood of Laxington ! Green-Oak Cottage, a shrubby little nook belonging to Mr. Forbes, of Manor-House, had been accidentally mentioned as to be let by her friend Mr. Cadogan, a Northamptonshire squire of ancient family and considerable fortune, who, being too young for herself, Lady Berkely kept in view as a future match for one

of her daughters ; and though her expectations were thwarted soon after her arrival in the country, by his marriage with Mr. Forbes's beautiful niece, Caroline Warren, her ladyship found so much to like at Green-Oak, that she almost forgave the offence.

To the two girls, meanwhile, the change from London to the country was highly acceptable. Uninitiated by contact with the fashionable world, they rejoiced in the prospect of seeing more of the woods and waters than an autumn at some fashionable bathing-place had yet afforded them. The rural pleasures familiar to other girls, were new and strange to the daughters of a card-playing mother, having no dower-house to afford a retreat to her intervals of folly and flirtation ; and Lady Berkely's selfish amusements had fortunately secured their education from her pernicious influence. Having been given in trust to a governess "highly recommended," they had learned as little as was convenient to herself and them ; but, as she happened to be an inoffensive woman, they had learned no harm. The best masters rendered them good musicians, good artists, good dancers ; while a happy combination of good sense and good feeling endowed them with excellent principles.

The circumstance, however, most ostensible and most acceptable to Lady Berkely, was, that they were remarkably handsome. Susan, the younger, was a mild graceful creature, incapable of inflicting or enduring pain. Her eyes were so serene, her movements so gentle, and the expression of her smile so full of sweetness, that children were won at first sight. But she was inert, timid, and endowed with limited capacities of mind. The love she inspired was not likely to be increased by jealousy, or depressed by the apprehension of her obtaining an overweening influence ;

but where could a more soothing companion be found to soften the asperities of human destiny!—

Marcia, on the contrary, possessed beauty of the most commanding order, and abilities of a high class. Of a temper less docile than her sister, she had twice the energy to serve, to defend, to inspire, to reward. But the talents which a better education would have directed to more useful purposes were condensed into an acute appreciation of all that was passing around her ; and she had therefore less patience than Susan with the intrusions of their country neighbours, and the petty egotism of Laxington. Her character demanded sympathies of a nobler kind.

The two sisters, meanwhile, were as fondly attached as sisters isolated from society are apt to be. Marcia doated upon Susan, as the sweetest and prettiest creature in the world : Susan looked up to Marcia, as the most gifted of human beings : and their happiness at Green-Oak was uninterrupted. The mildness of the one and philosophy of the other, enabled them to bear, in all duty and submission, the irritability which disappointments of every kind had engendered in their mother's disposition. They looked forward with eagerness to their brother's return to England ; and now that an agreeable, party-giving family was come to settle at Weald, had nothing further to desire. Susan was not without hope that the influence of the Hamiltons might wean her sister from the grave society of old Mrs. Warren, whom Lady Berkely denounced as a methodist ; while Marcia trusted that a little experience of the emptiness of dandyism would incline her pretty Susan in favour of the addresses of her devoted admirer, young Forbés.

But this was out of the question. Though Bernard Forbes figured largely on the narrow canvass of Lax-

ington and its neighbourhood, as heir to an estate of sixteen hundred per annum, there was nothing either in the Manor or its present or future master to captivate the attention of a young and timid girl. The square brick house, with its mossy lawn and sweeping cedars, was scarcely more old-fashioned than its valitudinarian squire, sinking into apathy from the want of something to complain of or somebody to thwart him ; whose monotonous life was expended in the labour of keeping body and soul together. For many years old Forbes had spent the summer and autumn in pilgrimages to the various saline and mineral waters which nature keeps eternally bubbling for the benefit of the infirm or fanciful among her children ; and the winter and spring, in discussing with his apothecary their several degrees of influence over his rheumatism and sciatica.

Who could have predicted that an eaglet's egg would be hatched in such a nest ! Young Forbes,—the first man of his year at Cambridge,—was already quoted by the voice of fame for the highest professional distinctions. There was nothing, however, in his person or address indicative of future eminence. Sallow, saturnine, hard-featured, careless of appearances, and trusting more to nature than nature is trustworthy, he was at no pains to conform to the customs of a community whose corruptions he despised. Conscious of his superiority to the tittle-tattlers of the Laxington coterie, he set them at defiance long before he had demonstrated his right to sit in judgment on their absurdities. His opinions were peculiar ; he expressed them without compromise ; and the revenge of those whose prejudices he offended, and who could find no fault with his character or understanding, was to asperse his temper.—He knew it, but receded not an

inch. Nor was it till Lady Berkely came to settle at Green-Oak, and he beheld the gentle Susan, that he began to lament his own want of popularity.

Between Susan Berkely and the philosophical Forbes, however, there existed a total incompatibility of disposition. To her humble and submissive nature, the very loftiness of mind on which he prided himself was an offence. His abstruse studies and cool discussion of questions which were as sacred mysteries in her sight, appeared “flat blasphemy” to Susan. She disliked his person, his principles, his manners; and would not have married him to become the Lady Chancelloress herself.

This aversion was so far fortunate, that nothing would have obtained Lady Berkely’s consent to the banishment of her favourite daughter to the ultra-montane region of pounce and parchment inhabited by the young lawyer. But Susan’s dislike being openly avowed, her ladyship felt safe in receiving Bernard Forbes on a familiar footing, in order that his intervention with his father might secure her those little paltry concessions, which usually form a stumbling-block between landlord and tenant;—a laundry to be built, a chimney to be taken down, or a path-way to be closed up;—and sincerely did he reverence the meanness which caused him to be an acceptable guest at the cottage whenever he visited Northamptonshire; trusting that his professional advancement would eventually disarm the opposition of the mother, and his devoted attachment the indifference of the daughter.

But though content to labour through a seven years’ servitude of love, so long as he had no rivalship to apprehend (for the slender curate of Dr. Mangles represented in his diminutive body and estate the whole bachelorhood of Laxington), he did not long retain his

equanimity on learning what a plague of prosperity, and pestilence of fashion, the arrival of the Hamiltons had brought down upon the parish ! What had the peaceful inhabitants of Lord Tottenham's borough done to deserve the chastisement of such an influx of dandies and fine ladies ?— “ *Que diable venait-on faire dans cette galère?* ”— Though new to the Smiths and Mangleses, the name of the Right Hon. George was only too familiar to Bernard Forbes !— The young patriot had learned to despise him, as one of the most corrupt members of a corrupt ministry, long before his pernicious intrusion into the Eden at Green-Oak ; and, on a hasty visit to the Manor-House in the course of the summer, had announced in a contemptuous tone, in presence of the whole Laxington coterie, his determination to hold no sort of intercourse with the family expected at Weald.

But now that an intimacy was in progress between the Berkelys and Hamiltons, he almost repented the rashness of his declaration of war. It was not alone the Toryism of the Privy Councillor which rendered him an object of antipathy to Forbes. The levity of his fashionable daughter,—the libertinism of his handsome son,— the rank and opulence of his ward, Lord Claneustace,—the evil example of his flighty inmate, Lady Leighton,—were all alarming to the peace of mind of Susan's lover ! He had been at college with Augustus Hamilton. The name of Sir Joseph Leighton's wife was somewhat notorious in the profession ; and he had public cognizance of the misdeeds of such persons as the Hon. William Tottenham, Colonel Eardley, and Peregrine Varden, the wag of Mr. Hamilton's party.

When an ill-timed visit to his father on the day of the eventful dinner-party dedicated to the Berkelys,

informed him that these people were united at Weald for his molestation, and that his beloved Susan was about to attempt the ordeal of the burning ploughshares, the intelligence was too much for him. He was crosser than he had ever been seen before. His father, exhilarated by a recent instance of professional success which had pointed out the name of his son to the applause of the County Chronicle, could by no means understand why Bernard turned so careless an ear to his recital of the vicissitudes of his lumbago; and was provoked that he could gain no information respecting his niece Mrs. Cadogan's return to Everleigh Hall. But poor Bernard's soul was elsewhere. In reply to his father's winding up of the cures performed by death or doctors during his six weeks' stay at Buxton, "I will walk over to the cottage tomorrow morning!" cried the ruminative barrister. "It is my duty to give that pompous silly woman some insight into the character of these people.—If she choose to admit Colonel Eardley and Lady Leighton into the society of her daughters, it shall not be for want of enlightenment.—What evil fortune brought these detestable people to Weald Park!"

CHAP. V.

A perfect butterfly!—a thing
Without substance, and almost
Without shadow!

FIELDING.

HAD Penelope Smith witnessed the fruition of those philanthropical matrimonial projects which agitated

her bosom at the first sight of Mr. Hamilton's carriage drawn up in the yard of the Tottenham Arms (as they became developed at the Weald Park dinner party), she would have had ample cause for exultation. But the proprietor of the carriage itself was really to be pitied!

His ward, Lord Claneustace, had most inopportunely chosen to accompany his son from town ; and the charms of the two beauties of Green-Oak, instead of diverting William Tottenham's attentions from the fair Julia, served only to engross those of the gay and brilliant Augustus Hamilton, and enchant the young Marquis, who happened to have been the Eton chum of their brother, Sir Edward Berkely !

It was not that Mr. Hamilton believed his son sufficiently idiotic, or sufficiently honest, to stumble into a tender passion for a girl with a pretty face and empty pockets ; for Augustus was a man of renowned gallantry, and had been already crowned with half-a-dozen myrtle wreaths at the expense of half-a-dozen reputations. But a flirtation of this nature would create an intimacy with the Berkelys, to the detriment, perhaps, of his daughter Julia's interests ; and might reach the ears of Lady Ashley of Stoke, whose jointure of eight thousand a-year would be the very thing for Augustus, in the event of his obtaining the peerage which his usefulness in the lower House had long held in tantalization before his eyes.—He was provoked, therefore, beyond measure with Julia, for inviting the Miss Berkelys to play, and the Miss Berkelys to sing, while *she* sat slyly enjoying an undisturbed flirtation with William Tottenham ; and was thankful to Mr. Peregrine Varden (the business of whose life it was to render himself agreeable to the greatest man or best patron in company) for observing, in an audible

whisper, that the performance of the young ladies was doubtless “very well *intended*.”

It was good enough, however, to keep Claneustace and Augustus Hamilton stationary in the music room ; — and that was enough to keep Lady Berkely in ecstasies. — She was delighted with every thing and everybody at Weald. The style of all she saw carried back her recollections to the more brilliant epoch of her destiny ; and renewed her disgust at the humdrum ways of Laxington and its neighbourhood. The handsome establishment of Mr. Hamilton touched a sympathetic chord in her bosom. — The proprietor of so admirable a cook, so varied a cellar, a service of plate so rich, and menials so accomplished, could not but be an estimable man. — The notion of Lord Claneustace’s forty thousand a-year, and the elegant address of Augustus Hamilton, bespoke, moreover, her utmost graciousness for the guardian of the one and parent of the other ; — and while she sat by Mr. Hamilton, evolving courtesy from every pore, and expressing her hopes that they should become the best of neighbours (tempered by her usual avowal, that it would be impossible for her to renounce, even in *his* favour, the staunchness of her Whig principles), she little suspected that he was already devising some plausible pretext for breaking off the acquaintance.

Lady Berkely retired to rest that night to dream of Mr. Hamilton’s gilt claret pitchers ; and of a dispute with the Herald’s Office touching the quarterly emblazonment of the arms of Berkely and Claneustace !

“ Marcia, my love,” said she to her elder daughter, on rising from the breakfast table the following morning, “ pray take off that old green gown, and dress your hair more becomingly. Some of the Weald Park party will probably call here to-day.”

"Most likcly, mamma. But *I* am engaged to my old green gown and Mrs. Warren."

"Are you going to see the poacher who was shot the other night in the Weald preserves?" inquired Susan.

"Precisely; and I hate to visit the poor in fine clothes. I read lately in a new French work that, to the unfortunate, even the sun in its glory looks pompous."

"I wish you would read fewer new works, and become more like other people!" cried Lady Berkely, with indignation. "And, above all things, I wish you would desist from parading your sensibilities from cottage to cottage, with that odious Mrs. Warren. In my opinion, it is vastly indelicate for young ladies to run after all the wounded poachers and lying-in women in the country. And pray remember —"

"I hear a carriage coming up the drive," said Susan, eager to interrupt her mother's reprehensions.

"Ring, ring, my dear, and say we are all at home!" cried Lady Berkely, scudding away into the drawing-room; when lo! in compliance with her injunction, the door being thrown open, Mrs. Mangles and Penelope Smith curtseyed their way into the room — all apologies for coming so early, but making manifest their intention of a long stay, by sending the carriage round to the stables. Lady Berkely, long accustomed to the habit of the Laxingtonians of luncheon-hunting in couples, and making visitations of investigation the day after any festive solemnity among the five letter-bag families, — sat down resignedly to listen to the humdrum catechism of the two gossips; satisfied that she had no chance of getting rid of them till they had ascertained every dish and every guest of the Weald Park dinner party of the day before.

"And so, that Lady Leighton is still staying with the Hamiltons!" observed Miss Pen., provocatively.
"Is there any connection between them?"

"A political connection between Sir Joseph and Mr. Hamilton, I fancy. Both are staunch Tories; and, although I was brought up —"

"Lady Leighton, my dear Mrs. M., is the identical person the Burtonshaws were telling you that strange story about the other night," remorselessly interrupted Miss Pen., addressing her friend Mrs. Mangles. "I should not be surprised if the handsome colonel came down to meet her at Weald."

"If you mean Colonel Eardley, he has been there this week past," observed Miss Berkely.

"I desire, Marcia, that you will not lend *your* voice to the circulation of scandal!" cried Lady Berkely, with angry pomposity. And poor Marcia immediately set about cogitating what could possibly constitute the scandal of the case.

"Well! If *I* had a young daughter, as Mr. Hamilton has," resumed Pen. (who, from the moment that gentleman engrafted himself upon the Laxington neighbourhood, had managed, with the aid of an extensive female correspondence, to pry into his concerns and those of his associates), "I hope I should know better than to domesticate such an inmate as Lady Leighton! — What *is* she, I should like to know, — and what *was* she? — Grand-daughter to a retired grocer at Southampton, and first cousin to the great haberdasher in Pall Mall! — And, as to conduct, if a house-maid were to present herself at Laxington Statute with such a character tacked to her calimaneo, — you and I, Mrs. M., should know what to say on the subject. — But some people —"

"Mr. Hamilton talks of building a lodge at the west

gate at Weald, which will be a vast accommodation to the neighbourhood," interrupted Lady Berkely, addressing her conversation to Mrs. Mangles.

"Ah! he may *talk* of building!" cried Pen., appropriating the observation to herself: "but while he is about it, why don't he build himself a *house*?—I'm told he has been living for the last sixteen years at May Field, a country seat belonging to the young marquis. Very convenient for some people,—a ward with a long minority! And now the young peer is coming of age, and the Hamiltons are obliged to turn out, they are going to marry him to Miss Julia, by way of a discharge in full, on closing the accounts. Ahem!—the old story—a match with my guardian's daughter! Mr. Hamilton may think himself mighty clever, but he will find plenty of people to keep an eye on his proceedings."

"With respect to Lord Claneustace you are mistaken," said Susan, eagerly. "Miss Hamilton is evidently engaged to one of Lord Tottenham's younger sons."

"One of Lord Tottenham's younger sons?" reiterated Penelope;—her indignation that the Green-Oak family should have been invited to dine at Weald without an extension of the honour to herself and her brother, being only augmented on finding that a piece of news respecting the Tottenhams was likely to reach Laxington through some other channel than the agency of their agent's sister. "I don't believe a word of it! There is not a wilder set in London than the young Tottenhams. Not a marrying man in the family but the archdeacon; and his father contrived to get *him* engaged, before he left college, to a bishop's daughter. No, no!—Lord Tottenham knows better than to stoop and pick up nothing. Depend upon it,

no son of *his* will marry Miss Julia Hamilton!" — And turning suddenly round at the conclusion of her tirade, she encountered the large dark eyes of Lady Leighton, who was entering through the French windows from the lawn! —

In another minute, the drawing-room door was thrown open, to announce Lord Claneustace, Mr. Augustus Hamilton, and Mr. Peregrine Varden, who had escorted her on horseback ; the two former being deputed to offer Mr. and Miss Hamilton's apologies for not being of the party. "The Duke and Duchess of Ptarmigan were expected to take their luncheon at Weald, on their way to the North."

The gratification of Lady Berkely at possessing the individual person of an unmarried marquis, and familiar mention of a duke and duchess, in her little drawing-room, was sadly deteriorated by the circumstance that it should be encumbered by two such very incongruous individuals as Mrs. Mangles and Penelope Smith. The room contained only a dozen seats, nine of which were occupied ; and when she looked hard in supplication to the two Laxingtonians to hasten their departure, the Laxingtonians were inexorable ! They did not often find themselves in such amusing company ; and, with all poor Pen.'s excitement against Weald and its ways, her match-making spirit found ample occupation in observing with how much gallantry the young marquis addressed himself to the handsome Marcia ; and how familiarly Augustus Hamilton seated himself at Susan's work-table. Lady Berkely, of course, saw nothing of all this. Mammas never do. She was engaged in eager conversation with Lady Leighton ; while Peregrine Varden, accustomed to do the disagreeable in all the houses into which he was admitted on sufferance, addressed his

civilities to the humdrums. All was chat, good humour, and sociability. The ladies were all smiles, — the dandies all devotion!

Such was the inauspicious moment selected by Forbes for his visit of remonstrance! He came, like Peter the Hermit, to preach a crusade against the infidels of Weald, and lo! on entering Lady Berkely's room, it was already invested by the enemy. The first thing that caught his eye was Susan's beaming face, turned with interest and approbation towards the libertine, Augustus Hamilton! Lady Berkely, who no longer required his services to get her letters franked, and who, in the prospect of a marquis for her son-in-law, scouted the notion of the new laundry, received him coldly; nor had Marcia, hemmed in between the marquis and Mr. Varden, an opportunity of atoning for her mother's ungraciousness. Had it not been for the officious volubility of Penelope Smith, the intruder would have been strangely embarrassed.

The object of Lady Leighton's visit, meanwhile, was partly explained. However anxious to pique Julia Hamilton's vanity by the spectacle of Lord Claneustace's attentions to Marcia, it was impossible to invite the Berkelys to a second dinner, or expect that the dining-room at Green Oak would stretch to receive the Weald party in return. But dull must be the neighbourhood that does not afford some spot of interest for a picnic, and young people to turn it to account; and Mr. Hamilton had, accordingly, commissioned his son and Lady Leighton to make arrangements for an excursion to some celebrated ruins, a few miles distant from Laxington.

"My friends at Weald are bent upon showing me the lions of the neighbourhood," observed Lady Leighton to her hostess, immediately after Forbes's abrupt

entrance ; “ and not being at present familiar with the road to their den, Mr. Hamilton is in hopes, my dear Madam, you will condescend to act as our cicerone to this abbey of St. Margaret’s, or St. Martin’s, or whatever it pleases to call itself.”

“ St. Margaret’s Priory, ma’am,” interrupted Penelope, who, as a Laxingtonian born and bred, was scarcely satisfied with this disparaging mention of a spot which constituted a chief feather in the cap of the neighbourhood. “ And if you wish for any information on the subject, here is our friend Mr. Forbes who will be delighted to give it you.”

“ May I inform the Hamiltons you will join our party ?” resumed Lady Leighton to Lady Berkely, having rewarded the strange woman’s officiousness with a stare of wonder; while Bernard Forbes, furious at being thus apostrophised, looked more bilious and misanthropic than ever.

“ We shall be most happy.”

“ Will Saturday be agreeable to you ?”

“ Perfectly.”

“ On Saturday, mamma, we are engaged to dine with Mrs. Warren,” interrupted Marcia.

“ I will write and excuse myself,” replied her mother. “ It is too late in the season for the picnic to be deferred ; and we can dine with Mrs. Warren at any time.” The Laxingtonians exchanged glances ; while Forbes’s heart swelled within him at the recollection that *he* had been invited to the Grove to meet the Green-Oak party.

“ And where shall be our rendezvous ?” said Lady Leighton. “ Is St. Martin’s Abbey — ”

(“ St. Margaret’s Priory,” perseveringly interrupted Penelope.)

“ — nearer to Weald or Green-Oak ?”

" You must breakfast here," said Lady Berkely, " and we will arrange a *plan de campagne*."

" With all my heart!" cried Lady Leighton. " There is a room kept in repair, it seems, among the ruins, to afford shelter to pilgrims in search of the picturesque; — and there we will eat, drink, and be merry."

Again, the Laxingtonians exchanged glances. St. Margaret's Priory was the property of Mr. Forbes; to whom, as a stiff country gentleman of the old school, it was a great satisfaction to receive notes from his neighbours, requesting permission to make parties to the ruins; to eat his filberts, and boil their tea-kettles in the damp dismantled room, in which, on Midsummer-day, it was his pride to receive the rents of two or three petty farmers, his tenants. And here was this stranger within the gates of a stranger, disposing of the old gentleman's privilege without hesitation or apology! Penelope Smith looked hard at Bernard, in hopes that his professional oratory and private indignation would explode; without suspecting that the wrath within him waxed too hot for words.

" I will make Mr. Hamilton's wishes known to my friend and landlord, Mr. Forbes," said Lady Berkely, lowering her voice, in the determination to make no appeal to Bernard which might render it necessary to include him in the party.

" What has Mr. Forbes to do with the matter?" — inquired Lady Leighton, apprehending no motive for caution. " *Who* is Mr. Forbes? — "

" The lord of the manor of St. Margaret's, my lady; — an estate which has been in his family three hundred years and more!" cried Miss Pen., unable to repress her irritation.

" So, after all, the placee *has* an owner, — and there

is leave to be asked, and thanks to be returned, and all that sort of bore ! ” — cried the imperturbable Lady Leighton. “ Not worth while, in my opinion ! — My dear Miss Berkely, your face looks full of meaning ! — Have you some more feasible project to suggest ? — Is there no hill or dale in this part of the wilderness, where we may establish our *sans souci*, and eat our cold chicken, without the nuisance of petitioning some Northamptonshire squire ? ”

“ There is Whitchurch Mill,” said Marcia, terrified lest Bernard Forbes should at length break silence.

“ Not half so fine a view as St. Margaret’s,” cried Miss Penelope. “ Nothing like St. Margaret’s, nearer than Fountain’s Abbey. Is there, Mr. Bernard ? — And *you* could go with the ladies, and show them the short cut through the woods to Goldington Well.”

Forbes had some difficulty in preventing himself from audibly wishing them all at the bottom of it ! Meanwhile, he profited by Lady Leighton’s example to turn a deaf ear to Miss Pen.’s superfluous interruptions.

“ At all events, we will meet here on Saturday morning,” said Lady Leighton, gathering up her habit, and rising to take leave. “ I dare say we shall discover some pleasant way of passing the day together. Augustus — Claneustace ! — I am sorry to tear you away, but I have promised to be back in time for a *petit mot d’adieu* to the Ptarmighans.”

And when the Laxingtonians perceived that the horses were rung for, it was but natural that, having so long made themselves disagreeable by staying, they should now choose an inconvenient moment for going. Mrs. Mangles’s eighteenth century chariot was brought to the door, just in time to produce confusion in the little carriage sweep. Away they all went ; and Bernard Forbes was left alone with the Berkelys.

CHAP. VI.

Voilà les jeunes gens ! — ils ne se doutent de rien ;
L'imagination leur fait tout voir en bien !
Si je n'arrêtais pas votre inexpérience,
Bientôt vous sentiriez toute votre imprudence.

LE PESSIMISTE.

AN intimacy once fairly begun between two families of young people in fine weather and a picturesque neighbourhood, with horses, carriages, and servants at their command, proceeds as briskly and uninterruptedly as a conflagration in the prairies. The picnic at Whitchurch Mill was succeeded by another in the woods of Apthorpe ; and parties were made to ride here and drive there, with a degree of activity which, could locomotion have assisted in transferring Julia Hamilton's affections from Mr. Tottenham to Lord Claneustace, might have fulfilled the utmost anticipations of her father.

But William Tottenham, an empty-headed, empty-hearted slave of fashion, whose admiration had been originally attracted towards the Privy Councillor's pretty daughter by hearing her announced at Almack's as the future bride of the young Marquis, and who persevered in his courtship because too stupid to perceive that its fruition would sink the fashionable beauty into a mere Honourable Mrs. William, scorned to relax in his devotions so long as Claneustace was on the spot to supply his place. The Cupid of modern times is a very different imp from the arch but naïf divinity of the olden time ; and, while Lord Tottenham's son persisted in his gallantries to Miss Hamilton

lest the Marquis's pretensions should be realised, the attentions of her brother to Susan Berkely were augmented by the intelligence (adroitly circulated by Lady Berkely, through the medium of the steward's room,) that her daughter had refused the hand of Mr. Forbes of Manor House, on the very day of his visit to Green-Oak.

It is true her ladyship was careful to conceal that the offer had been most injudiciously hazarded in the midst of a fierce attack upon Weald Park and its society,—more honourable to the young barrister's understanding than to his temper; that he had visited the cottage only to offer advice, and been betrayed into the tender of his hand by Lady Berkely's ungracious challenge of his right to become their counsellor. But she did not know half the advantage which this circumstance gave her over the feelings of Augustus Hamilton. To *him*, young Forbes was an object of envy and aversion. At college, Bernard had snatched every prize over his head; and assumed, on more than one occasion, a tone of superiority, warranted by eight years' seniority in age and a century's in understanding: and, on quitting Cambridge, all acquaintance between them had dropped. They had cut each other in the streets, at theatres, at clubs, at election dinners,—at all places, in short, where fine gentlemen and learned gentlemen are occasionally jumbled together. Forbes had been retained to plead against Hamilton in a cause which did little honour to the defendant; and his declaration of war against Weald and its allies, previous to the arrival of the Hamiltons in Northamptonshire, had been reported to Susan's new admirer in a tone far from calculated to appease the feud existing between them. Augustus was therefore doubly furious on learning that a fellow in spec-

tales, with such a coat and such a cravat as those in which Forbes defied the criticisms of society, had presumed to aspire to the hand of the lovely Susan. He almost grudged him the honour of rejection!

Not that the dandy of Downing Street entertained the most remote idea of a connection with Lady Berkely's daughter. He admired her as a beautiful bit of china,—a choice picture,—a rare exotic; and, perhaps, as affording a charming contrast to his last world-worn rouge-seared love,—a countess, whose eldest son was rising seventeen and whose husband seventy. But he pretended only to monopolise her smiles and conversation during his autumnal stay at his father's new residence. What might afterwards become of her happiness and hand, never entered into his calculations; or if it did, he wished she might live to become the wife of some more conjugally-minded individual. Even Mr. Hamilton, that epitome of worldly wisdom, witnessed the attentions of Augustus without anxiety. Lady Berkely was there to take care of her daughter; and he had perfect confidence in the want of principle of his son.

One person, however, scrutinised with painful misgivings the proceedings of all parties. Marcia Berkely had scarcely more patience than Bernard Forbes with the Hamiltons and their guests. Indignant that Lady Leighton should have rendered her the cats-paw of her plots,—a manœuvre which her clear judgment soon enabled her to discover,—she was still more seriously hurt by the apprehension that Susan's peace of mind might be sacrificed to the momentary caprice of the useless, valueless, soulless heir of Mr. Hamilton's future peerage. She knew not how to put a stop to it all. Susan and her mother were eager in their acceptance of the Hamiltons' invitations. Every day,

every hour, increased the mischievous influence of Augustus over her sister's mind; and even an adroit attempt to alarm the prudent father by a hint intentionally dropped in Peregrine Varden's presence, had proved infructuous. Mr. H. could not, would not, and might not, think so ill of his only son as to fancy he would prefer a girl without a guinea to Lady Ashley and Stoke Park; and Miss Berkely had begun to sigh for November, when the whole covey were to take flight for Brighton; when an untoward family event accelerated their departure!

While Mr. Hamilton was devising a pretext for dismissing William Tottenham from his house, without provoking a breach with the Tottenham family, the hint innocently dropped by Susan Berkely, in presence of Penelope Smith, reached the ears of the earl. To him, the intelligence was far from displeasing. A marriage of any kind might serve to wean his son from Crockford's and the Green Room; and he fancied that his friend Hamilton could not have been brooding so long in a government nest, without depositing a few golden eggs for the benefit of his children. Lord Tottenham determined, therefore, to offer a liberal provision to the young people; and as the prudent proprietor of Weald sat one morning in his library, about to adopt Lady Leighton's original plan, and address himself to Lord Tottenham for an interdiction of the match, the following letter was placed in his hands:—

“ Tottenham Park,
“ October 28th, 182—.

“ My dear Hamilton— You and I have been friends too long to stand on ceremony with each other. I am gratified to find that one of my boys has formed an attachment to your daughter; and propose making

over to William my sinecure in the Exchequer, (seven hundred and fifty pounds per annum,) and continuing his present allowance of two hundred and fifty pounds. I know not whether *you* have any little thing you can resign to him. If not, they might do very well with an allowance from you of five hundred a year, till you can hit upon something to ask of our friends in power. In the event of a dissolution, I mean to bring in William for Laxington : and all this will afford the young couple such a position in society as we could desire. My love to my daughter-in-law, and best wishes to yourself, from,

My dear Hamilton,
Your faithful servant,
TOTTEHAM."

Even the right of remonstrance was denied. Scarcely had Mr. Hamilton finished reading this off-hand epistle, when the "young couple" who had received a communication from Tottenham Park by the same post, made their appearance in the library, to plead their own cause, and, eventually, to thank him for his reluctant consent.

But when Julia quitted him to announce to her friends and guests the unexpected change in her prospects, a new source of vexation became manifest to her father. It had been evident, for some days past, that there was more earnest than simulation in Lord Claneustace's passion for the elder Miss Berkely ; and what was to prevent the marquis from offering his hand, in a fit of spleen or fickleness, to the nymph of Green-Oak ? Now, if it had appeared advisable to avoid a rupture with Lord Tottenham, whose interest was essential to his expected peerage, it was scarcely less important to prevent the too early marriage of

Claneustace with any other than his own daughter. There were accounts to be settled, and resignations to be made, by the guardian, which the attainment of a majority (deferred by the will of the late marquis till the age of twenty-five) still allowed him three years to provide for ; and Hamilton had observed too much shrewdness in Lady Berkely to consider her an auspicious mother-in-law for a ward over whom he hoped to retain a paramount influence. To remain at Weald and afford the marquis an opportunity for increased intimacy with Marcia, at such a critical moment, might be fatal. It was essential to break up the party ; and on pretext of the necessity of meeting his Majesty at Brighton, it was settled that Julia should accompany Lady Leighton, already on the wing for her winter campaign of marine flirtation.

Within four-and-twenty hours from the receipt of Lord Tottenham's letter, accordingly, every chaise-seat and imperial in the house was packed. The post-horses starved at the Tottenham arms, as well as an appendix from the nearest post-town, were bespoken ; and, before Miss Hamilton's letter, announcing her marriage and the departure of the family, reached Green-Oak, the equipages of the Weald party had once more passed the creaking turnpike gate !—Even the hope conceived by Lady Berkely, on her first perusal of the startling billet, that Augustus would remain behind, to shoot, hunt, and convert his mysterious whispers of attachment into an intelligible proposal of marriage, were frustrated on reaching the breakfast table. On the snowy damask that graced her ladyship's plate, lay the cards of Mr. Augustus Hamilton, and the Marquis of Claneustace “ P. P. C.” — the two young men having paused for a moment at

the Green-Oak gate, before the family were up, so as not to quit Northamptonshire without the ceremony of a farewell visit! —

CHAP. VII.

Cato made no distinction of times or things ; no allowance for the weakness of the republic, and the power of those who oppressed it. In an age, therefore, of the utmost libertinism, when the public discipline was lost, and the government tottering, he struggled with the same zeal against all corruption, and waged perpetual war with a superior force. — MIDDLETON.

It has been already admitted that Bernard Forbes, in spite of his sallow complexion and quizzical coat, was one of those remarkable men who make up, with ninety-nine of mediocre capacity, the complement of every hundred of the human race. He possessed great endowments, great attainments. There had been nothing in his monotonous home, nothing in the impulses of his own retiring disposition, to abstract him from studies which a strong capacity for personal enjoyment often renders fruitless. From his earliest years, he had distinguished himself ; and, though his politics were of a nature to close against him the chief avenues to preferment, as well as all access to parliament without such pecuniary aid from his father as the timid politics of old Forbes determined him to withhold, the ambition of the rising barrister was as ardent as his address was frigid. One advantage, indeed, resulted to him from the restraints of his position ;—he was prevented from stunning the public ear with that effervescence of boyish oratory, which

has precociously deteriorated the reputation of many a public man ; as well as from thrusting the crude fruit of his studies upon the experienced palate of veterans, accustomed to the rich flavour and nutritive properties of more mature productions.

But though thus sedate, thus contemplative, thus engrossed by a mighty sympathy with the interests of the human race, and though (for the whole truth must be told) a very ugly man, the destinies of Forbes were tinctured by a due admixture of romance. About a mile from the dull drowsy Manor House, stood the mansion of his father's sister, Mrs. Warren ; — gloomy with the shade of its grove of firs, — gloomy with the severe Calvinism of the widow by whom it was inhabited. Yet, in this peculiarly mournful retreat, had one of the caprices of nature fostered the girlish beauty, and more than girlish levity of his cousin, Caroline Warren ; between whom and young Bernard, the providence of the brother and sister, eager to unite the fortunes of their only children, had instituted one of those cradle engagements which form so severe a libel on parental wisdom. They had even gone the usual absurd length of admitting the children into their confidence ; and Caroline, educated in considerable awe of her mother, was prevented from expressing her distaste for her shy, awkward cousin, only by her knowledge that Mrs. Warren's resolves were immutable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. Satisfied that she should be obliged, at last, to marry Bernard, a prudence somewhat too calculating for her years prompted the mortified beauty to conceal her disgust and forbear all opposition.

Bernard, engrossed by his studies, was too rarely domiciliated at the Manor to have leisure for observing more than that cousin Caroline had the prettiest face

and gentlest manners of any girl of his acquaintance. The harsh rationalities of her mother satisfied him of the strictness of her education; and the courtesy of her demeanour towards himself announced the most submissive and feminine of wives. She had never visited the metropolis, and knew nothing of its fashions and frivolities; but had mixed freely in the society of the “genteel” neighbourhood of Laxington; *more* freely, indeed, than appeared desirable to her mother, when the marriage of Sir William Ashley introduced at Stoke the dashing, pleasure-loving woman, who was now his widow. Mr. Cadogan of Everleigh, too, became more assiduous in his attentions at Fir Grove than seemed eligible to its grave proprietress. Not that she foresaw permanent mischief from the intimacy. For Mr. Cadogan was a child of reprobation,—a Roman Catholie; and bigoted and credulous even beyond the bigotry and credulity of the church which was the object of her abhorrence, she could not conceive it possible that a child of hers,—a child of regeneration and grace,—should incline towards a Papist. For if Mrs. Warren did not absolutely desire to see her neighbour Mr. Cadogan burnt at the stake, she regarded him as predestined to a far more fearful order of conflagration.

While thus engrossed by a fanaticism of her own, Caroline found time to form other opinions, in which the well-bred, well-dressed Cadogan played a distinguished part. She contrasted *his* attentions with the insulting *sang-froid* of her cousin;—the wooded ravines and elegant portico of Everleigh, with the dreariness of the Manor House;—the brilliancy of the gay circles of the West End described to her by Lady Ashley, with the monotony of the professional society awaiting a Mrs. Bernard Forbes. She had heard of Cadogan’s

rich family jewels, and high family connections. She saw him eager as herself in the pursuit of amusement. He was a *dilettante*, a traveller, a courtier ; and, already pre-disposed against her cousin's dryness, ungainliness and abstraction, instead of shrinking from the Papistry of Everleigh, Caroline would almost have become a Mahomedan to escape the destiny before her !

Such was the state of mutual feeling between the cousins, — their marriage being appointed for the ensuing year, — when the Berkely family took possession of Green-Oak. Lady Berkely's designs upon the wealthy Mr. Cadogan have been already glanced at ; and, though Susan was but fourteen on their instalment at the Cottage, Marcia was already introduced into society. Yet the Esquire of Everleigh stood aloof, — *sans* eyes for Miss Berkely's fine figure and Grecian countenance ; and her ladyship lost no time in ascertaining that his admiration was engrossed elsewhere. The engagements formed between old Forbes and his sister were no secret : and Lady Berkely's maternal tact accordingly suggested the possibility of drawing old Forbes's attention to the culpabilities of his niece.

But her new landlord was not a man to be easily impressed on such a subject. Wrapt up in measureless content by the daily assurances of the Tory newspapers that the affairs of the nation collectively, as well as of the individuals composing the nation, were upon velvet ; that wars, taxation, riots, the press bill, and the slave trade, were chimeras, — a thing devised by the enemy to agitate the public mind ; that all was

Wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best,

from one end of England to the other, Mr. Forbes believed in no positive evil, saving his own lumbago ; no

moral wrong, save the radicalism of his son, and the backbitings of Penelope Smith : so that Lady Berkely found it impossible to hint him into any thing like mistrust of his pretty Caroline.

Having found the father thus invulnerable to insinuation, her system of false logic induced her to try a more direct path with the son ; and the next time Bernard visited Green-Oak to put in the old gentleman's answer to her plea respecting a right of pasturage in Westham Mead, she informed him in plain English that "Miss Warren had been met walking with Mr. Cadogan, in the dusk of the evening and dews of the morning, when the old lady was known to be at her devotions ; and, that there was reason to believe his fair cousin entertained a correspondence with the rich Papist of Everleigh Hall :" a communication by which Lady Berkely fancied she had placed an effectual bar to the flirtation.

It never occurred to her that she could be endangering human life. It never occurred to her that Bernard Forbes, so sober, so professional, so matter-of-fact, and who, moreover, received her evidence with the same undemonstrative brow he would have worn on hearing the same produced in a cause in court, would take fire sufficiently to call Mr. Cadogan to account for having tampered with the fidelity of his affianced wife ; or that, having given the gentleman this severe commentary on the code of honour, he would formally renounce all claim to the hand and inheritance of the terrified lady. In vain did his aunt appeal to his forbearance. In vain did his father threaten to cut him off with a shilling, and give his whole estate to Caroline. "Give it her !" was his sole reply, "she will need something to console her for the double part she has been playing."

But the young lady did not content herself with such consolation. Mrs. Warren's displeasure against her nephew was soon converted into implacable resentment against her daughter; who, released from her betrothment, soon became the bride of Mr. Cadogan. The old lady was too proud, or perhaps too tender of Caroline's reputation, to admit to the world the extent of her mortification; but it was observed that her hair grew grey, and her face furrowed as with extreme age, from the day of this unhallowed marriage. Mr. Forbes indeed saw nothing to blame in it. Since his niece was not to marry his son, what could she do better than marry a right-thinking gentlemanly man, like his neighbour Cadogan; who took in the Morning Post, and had claims upon a dormant barony? He was not indeed quite so well satisfied when Pen. Smith acquainted him in the course of the winter, that his son had been observed to sit watching the sweet smiles of Lady Berkely's younger daughter, with a degree of attention he had never bestowed on those of Caroline Warren. "To be sure she was a mere child—scarcely fifteen. But girls *would* grow into women; and progressive attachments are always the most lasting."

It is not improbable, indeed, that Miss Pen. extended her communications on the subject to her dear Mrs. Cadogan. For it was observed by the Laxingtonians, that no cordial intimacy was ever renewed between Everleigh and Green-Oak; and though Mr. Cadogan had been the original means of transplanting the Berkelys into Northamptonshire, they rarely formed part of the gay circle collected round its young mistress. Lady Ashley was her bosom friend; — old Pen. her *souffre-douleur*; — but Marcia and

Susan never entered the Hall, except with the general throng.

Mrs. Cadogan herself was, however, often absent.— She had passed one winter at Rome, since her marriage ; and two at Paris. In both cities, she had attracted universal admiration ; and the coldness and reserve maintained towards her by her offended parent, were judged by the Laxington coterie to be fully compensated by the excess of her popularity in the great world of London. She was so pretty, so well-dressed, and, in a word, what the slang of familiar colloquy is pleased to designate such a very “sweet woman,” that nothing could exceed the favour of her reception in society. Her husband appeared fondly attached to her, and was richer by two thousand a year than when she jilted Bernard Forbes, to become his wife.

— What more could she desire on earth ?

The oracles of the Laxington market-place responded — “Nothing !” Her more discerning cousin was of a different way of thinking. In Bernard’s opinion, there was motive for suspicion in the extreme restlessness of the happy couple. They had a fine old country seat, enhanced by every modern adornment. But they could not stay in it. The Cadogans were always coming,— always going ;— and Bernard, who had begun to admit to himself that Great Coram Street, with one fair spirit for his minister, with pretty Susan to smile upon him sharing his frugal fare and common-sensical mode of life, would be enough for Paradise, was tempted to fancy that Caroline, who, like Desdemona, had cheated her kindred and outraged her early instincts in her marriage, had her share of matrimonial crosses. There was something vindictive too, something of the vindictiveness of disappointment, in her demeanour towards himself.

She always took care to hint her knowledge of his attachment, and of Susan Berkely's aversion. She had been the first to congratulate him on the accession his Green-Oak friends would derive from such neighbours as the Hamiltons and their official circle. She was now equally prompt in acquainting him (though but just arrived in town on her way from Spa to Brighton), "that Augustus Hamilton, after devoting his attentions the whole autumn to poor Susan Berkely, had scandalously disappointed Lady Berkely's expectations, by leaving the whole family *plantée!*" — Such was the gentle Caroline's new way to pay old debts!

CHAP. VIII.

The hind that would be mated with the lion
Must die for love.

SHAKSPEARE.

BUT were these rumours well-founded? Had Mr. Hamilton's conduct been such as to justify serious expectations on the part of the Berkely family; and were those expectations already frustrated?

By no means! Lady Berkely, though startled and mortified by the abrupt departure of Augustus, was perfectly satisfied of his intention to return at Christmas, for the renewal of his courtship; and *almost* satisfied with the apology devised by Susan for his proceedings, that he was under the necessity of accompanying his father to Brighton. It was only Marcia who saw things in a sinister light. Throughout the

progress of intimacy between the two families, she had warned her sister against allowing herself to form a preference for a man so notoriously unprincipled as young Hamilton ; — a man, concerning whom, their old and esteemed friend Bernard had laboured to enlighten their judgment. And now that the ordeal was over, she had no hesitation in admitting her belief that Forbes's hints were well-founded ; that Augustus was pledged to obey his father's well-known plan for his marriage with Lady Ashley ; and, that they had seen the last of him at Green-Oak.

" Do not expect me to encourage you in regretting him," said she to Susan, in quiet sisterly confidence. " He is unworthy of you ; an egotist, — a sloth, — a being incapable of those domestic affections so indispensable to your happiness. Be assured, moreover, that Mr. Hamilton would never consent to accept a daughter-in-law without fortune or family interest, — the golden calves to which he bows the knee."

" Augustus has a place which brings him seven hundred a-year. *I* have three thousand pounds ; and surely two persons attached to each other might manage to exist on eight hundred a year ? " faltered Susan.

" You and I might exist on eight hundred a year, for we have been brought up frugally. But Augustus Hamilton, who quarrels with a grain of pepper too much in his soup, and cannot coax himself into good humour with the proficiency of his father's French cook ; — think of such a man living from June to January on tough roast mutton ! — "

" But why must it be tough ? " said Susan, trying to smile.

" A man without character or self-command," persisted Marcia, " to conceal or endure the mortifications

inseparable from a narrow income! A man, who has been fluttering, all his life long, on the silken wings of prosperity!"

"And who, you fancy, would perish, like other butterflies, on the first approach of winter—"

"Pardon me,—he would do nothing half so judicious! He would live on, to squabble with his patient wife, scold his unwelcome children, and sulk with fortune."

"You have been at little pains to study his good qualities!"

"I have no great opinion of the qualities that require profound study. I prefer such as are easily demonstrated—good sense, good temper, good principles.—Dearest Susan!—had you but been less precipitate in your condemnation of Bernard Forbes!—"

"His temper, for instance—"

"His *character* is perfect!"

"His person, then?"

"Redeemed by one of the most intellectual countenances in the world,—all sense and benevolence!"

"You talk as if you were in love with him yourself," said Susan, archly.

"Do I?—I give a strange proof of it in striving to promote his marriage with another!" replied Marcia, colouring deeply.

"Just such as I should expect from you, my dearest sister, if you believe his happiness and mine likely to be ensured by our union!" cried Susan, throwing her arms round her sister's neck.

"What is the matter—what *is* the matter!" cried Lady Berkely, bursting into the room, and inferring from these demonstrations that the catastrophe of a proposal had taken place,—"Have you received a letter, Susan?—It is very strange you should look

yourselves up here. It is very strange *I* should be the last person consulted in my family! — One would think I had no interest in my children's welfare!"

"I have had no letter," replied Susan, trying to recover herself. "Marcia was simply persuading me to congratulate myself that no such letter as you expect is likely to make its appearance."

"Marcia is very officious!" interrupted Lady Berkely. "What does *she* know of the world, to render her a better adviser than myself?"

"It is because she knows *less*, that she presumes to offer her opinion," replied the elder daughter, calmly. "I know little of that small fraction of society which calls itself the world; — but if human nature —"

"Human nonsense!" cried Lady Berkely. "Nothing is more offensive in the mouth of a girl of twenty than such an expression as human nature! I wonder where you picked up these absurdities? All I can say is, that if Hamilton *should* tender his proposals, and Susan refuse them —"

"He will *not*!" murmured poor Susan.

"She will be behaving like a fool, and I shall thank *you* for her folly. Just like your obstinacy in laughing at the attentions of Lord Claneustace: which, if not serious, might easily have been made so; and after turning him into ridicule, affecting to flirt with that puppy Colonel Eardley, who is anything but a marrying man!"

"That *was* wrong!" exclaimed Marcia, unable to repress a smile arising from some involuntary reminiscence. "But what carriage is this driving to the door?"

"Augustus's phaeton!" cried Susan, starting up.

"No, dearest," replied Marcia, having glanced from

the window. "Only a chariot full of the plagues from Laxington!—"

"Come to exult over us!" groaned Lady Berkely, who had managed to affront all her old acquaintances during her intoxicating intimacy with the Hamiltons.

But on this head, ten minutes' conversation served to re-assure her. The Laxingtonians were innocent of all malevolent intention. Mrs. Mangles came only to observe, "that the winter was setting in,—that the glass had fallen,—that the gardener at the vicarage expected rain, and was matting up his auriculas;—that Mrs. Warren was laid up with the face ache; that the woman at the turnpike had had twins;—that her cousins the Burtonshaws had taken a house in town;—that the Cadogans and Lady Ashley were going to spend the winter at Brighton, or Worthing, or Cheltenham, she did not know which;"—and various other items of intelligence, such as form the staple of conversation in a country visit. Weald Park was at length mentioned, but only in a parenthesis. Mrs. Mangles was thinking of having her front parlour ingrained in maple-wood; Pen. Smith having informed her that nothing was the fashion at Northampton but ingrained wainscot. But Wilson the plumber (the only man in Laxington equal to the job), was not to be had at present, being engaged on the morning-room and chintz bed-room at Weald Park, which he had promised to put in hand directly, so that the smell of paint might be over by Christmas.

"Very true. The family will be back for the holidays," said Lady Berkely, half interrogatively.

"Oh dear no, ma'am; you must have been misinformed," cried the vicar's lady. "The Weald Park housekeeper told Byles the fishmonger, as long as a week ago, that there was no chance of their coming

back again this winter ; but that Miss Julia (Mrs. Tottenham that is to be) might very likely pass the honeymoon at her father's."

"But my dear Mrs. M.,—*Lady Berkely* must certainly know best," cried Pen. Smith, sneeringly. "Of course, *Lady Berkely* is acquainted with their plans ; only she may not like to talk about them to *us*, who are not in the secret."

"I am not aware that there *is* a secret!" said her ladyship, trying to look conscious. "You must settle it among you at Laxington as you please. *I* am quite in the dark."

Miss Pen. would have pursued her ironical attack, had she not perceived Susan Berkely growing red and pale, evidently terrified at what might fall from her mother's lips. She immediately desisted. No one felt inclined to give pain to Susan. Several of the Laxingtonians voted Lady Berkely disagreeable, and Marcia high. But every body loved Susan,—so mild, so benevolent, so forbearing, so unpresuming ! It would have been a sin to aggravate any uneasiness of hers !

In truth, the poor girl's troubles needed no augmentation. The attentions of Augustus Hamilton had been of a more pointed nature than either her mother or sister suspected. He had admitted his attachment, even while adverting to his marriage as an event dependent on the caprice of his father ; and Susan, who found in the ingratiating suavity of his manners something peculiarly consonant with her own timid disposition, had finally given her heart into his keeping. Her former avocations had ceased to interest her,—her former pursuits were neglected. The first bright glimpse of a home made blessed by the

joys of domestic life had dawned upon her hopes—and in vain! There was no comfort for Susan.

Weeks passed away; and no further tidings of the Hamiltons reached Laxington than that they were amusing themselves among the gayest of the gay at Brighton. They were named by the newspapers as sharers of royal festivities, and Lord Claneustace's departure for the continent was formally announced; but not a word of the return of the family to Weald Park! Even Marcia, averse as she was to all thoughts of a marriage between her sister and Augustus, was almost inclined to compromise for such a misfortune, after witnessing the excess of Susan's despondency. The poor girl uttered not a word of complaint. But her spirits were gone,—her beauty was going. She rested not by night,—she smiled not by day;—she was an altered being! Even her last faint trust that Mrs. Tottenham's expected sojourn at Weald Park would bring back Augustus as her guest, was destined to disappointment. The Morning Post, in announcing the solemnization of a marriage between "Julia, only daughter of the Right Hon. George Hamilton, and the Hon. William, third son to the Earl of Tottenham," informed the anxious world that the "happy pair had left Brighton for Bucklands, the beautiful seat of Lord Downing, on the banks of the Thames!"

CHAP. IX.

Elle ennuiait en voulant briller ; et l'ambition de passer pour bel esprit ne lui a donné que la réputation d'ennuyeuse. — GRAMMONT.

“ So ! — *there* goes another couple to graze upon the common, or the commons’ field ! ” said Lady Leighton, as she stood with Colonel Eardley, watching the departure of the bridal chariot of the Tottenhams from her window in Regency Square. “ After all, the girl, though light-headed and light-hearted, is a good girl. She has preferred a little paltry nutshell in Brook Street to Claneustace Court, with all its pomps and vanities.”

“ And what will she say to her father (some day or other when she knows more of the world) for having sanctioned her folly ? ” cried Colonel Eardley.

“ Nothing very severe, I hope. With William Tottenham, why should she not be happy ? He is lively, and good-natured — ”

“ So long as the sun shines, — his hair keeps in curl, — and his linen is starched to the sticking point. But sweet Willy is a fop and a fool ; and should the scale turn, and old Tottenham’s party shrink into a minority, your friend Julia may chance to discover that she has married a man whose wits will not suffice to pay his hair-dresser’s bill ; — whose head and heart are alike bankrupt ; — and who not only wishes her at the devil, but makes no scruple in telling her so.”

“ But we do not intend to shrink into a minority ! ” cried Lady Leighton. “ Be pleased to remember, that when sweet Willy and his wife forfeit their govern-

ment roll, *my* loaf is also in danger ! Trust me, the oven is as well heated as ever. Varden is a political thermometer ; and never was he more assiduous in toadying Lord Shetland, than last night at the Cadogans' ball."

" By the way, what is Augustus Hamilton about, at the Cadogans' ?—He never quits their house."

" Making love, I suppose, to Lady Ashley. His father wants her jointure to gild the balls of his impending coronet."

" A fine showy woman ;—but I would as soon marry the United Service Club. I never saw such an amazon ! What has become of that pretty little pensive Susan Berkely, at whose feet we saw him sighing last autumn ?"

" Do you suppose I keep a record of the gossip of all the country houses in which I parade my tediousness ?" replied Lady Leighton.

" Aha ! Still jealous of the handsome sister, who did her best to patronize *me* !" cried the irresistible George.

" Who did her best, you mean, to torment *me*, in revenge for my suggesting Claneustace's homage to *her*. However, she acquitted me at last ; for to my surprise,—and hers,—and I believe almost to his own,—the boy actually proposed to her before he quitted Northamptonshire."

" And she refused him ?"

" Peremptorily !—told him that it was carrying his spite to Julia Hamilton a little beyond the mark ;—assured him he cared for her, in reality, as little as she cared for *him* ; and even went so far as to inform him her affections were engaged to another."

" To *me*, perhaps ?"—cried George Eardley, laughing. " Well ! I am disposed to be very compassionate.

I should not behave to *my* Northamptonshire Clarissa as Hamilton has done to his."

"Their father was a distinguished officer,—a man of high honour!"—said Lady Leighton, in a tone of rebuke.

"How long is it since you took up the heroic line of parts?" inquired the Colonel, with the most provoking *sang-froid*.

"Ever since my intimacy with the Eardley *clique* convinced me to what an excess of frightfulness we may be brought by a universal sneer!" cried Lady Leighton. "I am but a tyro among you; but my occasional gleams of principle, like flashes of lightning in a storm, serve to show me the hideousness of the pale distorted faces of my companions."

"Very poetical,—almost apothegmatic!" cried Eardley, succeeding, after many efforts, in enclosing his symmetrical feet between two stripes in the pattern of the carpet. "*Parole d'honneur*, a woman's mind is a most amusing study! After going to the utmost expense in furnishing it with one or two strong ideas, she can never manage to dispense with the little claptrap Mrs. Goodchildisms of her infancy!"

"In which supposition, apprehending that Eve may feel inclined to return to the pleasant paths of Eden, you take care to wave the flaming sword of ridicule at the gates of Paradise!"

"More poetry!"

"Between ourselves, my dear Eardley, you Don Juans of the coteries are always missing your mark, by aiming too low," cried Lady Leighton. "You fancy the wickedest wickeder than they are. Because I entertain a woman's spite against that elder Berkely girl, you think I shall have pleasure in seeing her sister unfairly treated by the Hamiltons."

"Far from it! I am persuaded you are dreadfully shocked to know that he entertains more compassion for his creditors than for our pretty Susan."

"Be as witty as you please; but you cannot convince me that Augustus has not behaved infamously."

"Do you know," said Eardley, rising and ringing for his horse, "that when you are in these humours, you remind me of a bog on my Irish estate, in which lie half a dozen masses of granite, up to their ears in —, but I won't affront you! I intend to stay at least three weeks longer at Brighton; and cannot afford to quarrel with the only woman who is kind enough to put up with my impertinence, or favour me with her own."

Far more warm would have been Lady Leighton's advocacy of Susan's cause, had she witnessed the result of Hamilton's conduct! — Impossible to see a greater change than the lapse of a few months had wrought in her person and disposition. She would now sit for hours, absorbed in listless meditation; and not even the tenderness of her sister, or taunts of her mother, could rouse her from her reveries. Pen. Smith was of opinion that the air of Green-Oak was too damp for her, and recommended Iceland moss; Mr. Forbes saw in her pale face, the shadow of a coming lumbago, and prescribed Welsh flannel and colchicum; while Lady Berkely, so long anxious for Hamilton's return, was now terrified lest he should make his appearance, and find the invalid thus sadly altered.

It afforded her some comfort to gather from the gossip of Penelope that there was no chance of his quitting Brighton. Pen. had been paying a morning visit at the Manor House, where she heard from old Forbes, who had heard from Mrs. Warren, who had

heard from Mrs. Cadogan, that Augustus Hamilton was the life and soul of the Pavilion.

"I do not feel inclined to yield implicit confidence to any report emanating from Mrs. Cadogan," said Marcia, calmly, after Pen's departure.

"Not from *Mrs. Cadogan*, the daughter of your conscientious friend, Mrs. Warren?" cried her mother.

"Not from the daughter who *deceived* my conscientious friend, Mrs. Warren; and who, for many years past, has been camping with the enemy."

"If I did but surely know," murmured Susan, "that Mr. Hamilton had made up his mind to acquiesce in his father's desire for his marriage with Lady Ashley, I should respect his obedience and make it my duty to banish him from my thoughts. The expectation of seeing him the husband of another woman would suffice to alter my views and feelings."

"If that be the case," said Marcia, as soon as her mother left them alone, "I will walk over immediately to Mrs. Warren's, and beg her to ascertain from her daughter the exact truth. You may rely on my old friend's discretion. She is incapable of uttering a word, or conceiving an opinion, injurious to the happiness of others."

"Do, dearest!" said her sister, accepting her parting kiss, and resuming her place by the fire-side; while Miss Berkely proceeded to secure the attendance of a Newfoundland dog of their brother, the usual companion of their walks. Her errand, and the hopes to which it gave rise, accelerated her steps. In half an hour, glowing with exercise and the air of a frosty day, she reached the sober, solemn parlour of Fir Grove.

But her visit was singularly ill-timed. A gentleman, engaged in earnest conversation with her ancient friend

arose on Miss Berkely's entrance, as if meditating a retreat. It was Bernard Forbes ! The first time they had met since his abrupt dismissal from the cottage!—

CHAP. X.

“Tout cela,” dit Voltaire, “pourrait être agréable en vers ; mais, mon ami, l’art de conter en prose, c’est de décrire légèrement, et de passer vite à la scène.” — MARMONTEL.

“WE meet as friends, I trust,” said Marcia, advancing firmly towards him, and extending her hand.

“I was not certain in what light you would be pleased to consider me,” replied he, with a bitter smile, but pressing her offered hand.

“In that of an old friend and neighbour, of course,” cried Marcia, speaking cheerfully. “We are very proud of you just now. We hear of nothing but your professional triumphs, and the silk gown that awaits them.”

“What will they do for the happiness of a man whose hopes are crushed like mine !”

“Still, you must allow *us* to exult in your prospects. It is not often that Laxington distinguishes itself ; and we must be permitted to snatch a sprig of laurel when and where we can. Pen. Smith threatens to torment her brother and Dr. Mangles into a reading-room, so soon as you get into parliament.” But on glancing again at Mr. Forbes, she discerned traces of emotion in his countenance, which forbade her to pursue her vein of pleasantry.

“My nephew has been discussing with me his past and present prospects,” said Mrs. Warren, in those mild persuasive tones which can touch upon the most

delicate subjects without offence. “ He does not at present appreciate the importance of his mission ; or the high purposes to which, by the grace of God, his talents may one day be applied. We, who know him, did not expect to see his mind so shaken by personal disappointment.”

“ If you know me, or understand human nature,” he replied in a low tone, “ you must be aware that persons estranged like myself from the affections of life, yield paramount importance to the influence of the one woman in whom they hope to find their companion, their friend, their recompense. I have been venturing to talk for the first time about your sister,” he continued, turning abruptly towards Marcia. “ It is indispensable to my comfort to ascertain the truth of a report generally circulated, that my warning to Lady Berkely was given in vain ;—that Susan is ill and unhappy ; — that Hamilton has proved himself a scoundrel.”

“ We have nothing to complain of,” said Marcia, scarcely knowing how to answer him, when she saw how fierce an expression was kindling in his eyes, and recollected the catastrophe of Mr. Cadogan. “ We are but country girls, you know ; and may have been tempted to overrate the attentions of the first fine gentleman who fell in our company. Before the Hamiltons return to Weald, we shall have grown wiser.”

“ Marcia, you are not candid with me !” cried Forbes, trying to interrupt the ironical expression of her countenance. “ You have too much delicacy to admit that this coxcomb has behaved in a manner which, were Sir Edward in England, and of an age to resent his insolence, would not go unpunished.”

“ I trust my brother’s sisters will never have to thank him for dragooning a lover to their feet,” ob-

served Miss Berkely, with becoming pride. “ Susan is not a girl whom a man ought to be hectored into marrying !”

“ You mistake me — you utterly mistake me,” cried Forbes. “ It is *chastisement* I would inflict upon the fellow.”

“ But if Susan be really attached to him ?”

“ And have *you* also become his advocate ?”

“ So little, that, notwithstanding your impugnment of my candour, I frankly confess I would rather see my sister dispirited and mortified for a year or two, than the wife of Augustus Hamilton with the most brilliant prospects.—Such a marriage *must* end in misery !”

Mrs. Warren shook her head ; while her nephew assumed a more cheerful countenance, and drew his chair nearer to Miss Berkely. “ Should Susan eventually dismiss this worthless fellow from her regard, have I, do you think, any chance of her relenting in my favour ?” said he, in a low voice.

“ Perhaps I ought to say, ‘ None ’— but I am too earnest in your cause not to hope that you will wait and see.”

“ I am satisfied !” cried he : “ for, be assured, there is no probability of further advances on the part of Hamilton. Take my word for it, he remains at Brighton for some time to come !”

“ I would rather take an explanation of your grounds for thinking so ?”

“ Excuse me,—I can say no more.”

“ Not when I assure you that you will be doing my sister a great kindness ?”

“ Of that allow me to be the best judge.”

“ Are you passing the day here ?” abruptly demanded Miss Berkely, more than ever anxious to get

rid of him, in order to prosecute her inquiries of Mrs. Warren.

"I am.—You look as if you pitied my aunt for having so uncompanionable a visitor."

"No,—I am thinking that unless I hasten my return to Green-Oak, Susan will be left alone. My mother is going to drive to Laxington this morning."

"She must be seriously ill, since you are apprehensive of leaving her alone for an hour or two?" said Forbes, having waited till Miss Berkely's farewell to her old friend was over, to obtain permission to escort her home. "Answer me truly!—Have you,—have we,—any grounds for uneasiness?"

"You seem very much bent on making yourself unhappy this morning," replied Marcia, somewhat embarrassed by his company, and hastening her steps across the fields with great precipitation.

"Have I not cause?—I find myself on the road to fortune. I see honours within my grasp which once appeared unattainable. I discern a career before me full of triumph and glory. And, alas! the only person to whom I would dedicate the enjoyment of all this prosperity, not only disdains to share it with me, but the precariousness of her own happiness debars me from all consolation!—I cannot divest myself of a presentiment that Susan is doomed to a life of misery."

"For Heaven's sake do not say so!" cried Marcia, gathering courage when the garden gate of Green-Oak came in sight, and her awkward position was about to end. "Allow me still to fancy that her future destinies depend upon yourself!"

"If *you* only bid me hope on," said he, pressing her hand at parting, and speaking with great emotion, "I am content."

"I *do* bid you hope on!" she replied. "Farewell!—

Get as many briefs as you can ; and do not trouble your head too much about us, till some fine morning you receive a letter from me saying, ‘ Susan has become a reasonable being. Be it your task to render her a happy one.’ ”

“ You have given me a prospect worth living for,” he cried. But the garden gate had opened and shut, and Marcia was already out of sight. Hurrying along the shrubberies, she reached the hall-door, and entered the morning room, determined to plead the cause of Bernard Forbes with a degree of unction which the persevering nature of his attachment seemed to justify ; to enlarge upon his honourable character, his high standing in the world, his noble qualities. And *who* was better qualified to descant upon them than herself ?—

She reached the sitting-room, — she threw open the door. Susan was seated in the cozy nook in which she had left her, between the fire-place and the work-table ; with an embroidery-frame before her, as a pretext of employment. But, alas ! close beside her, bending over her, whispering to her, gazing upon the brilliancy of her flushed cheeks, with his favourite spaniel crouching at her feet, sat the truant, Augustus Hamilton ;—welcomed as though he had done no evil ; nay, for aught she knew, accepted as a lover and a husband!—Poor Marcia, in whose ears the manly voice of Forbes, broken with emotion, was still ringing, had scarcely patience to greet the listless dandy with civility.

At length, in pity to Susan’s evident embarrassment, she stammered out an inquiry after Mrs. Tottenham. “ Had he accompanied his sister to Weald ?”

“ No :— he was staying at Everleigh with the Cadogans.”

"The Cadogans!" reiterated Marcia, more and more astonished. "I have just quitted Mrs. Warren, and she knew nothing of her daughter's arrival."

"It was a sudden freak. We quitted Brighton the day before yesterday, and arrived last night at Everleigh."

"We have to thank you for so early a visit," observed Marcia, with an expression of countenance she could not control.

"We have to thank Pen. Smith for it," said Susan, in a tremulous voice. "Mr. Hamilton met her airing with Mrs. Mangles, as he was riding over to Weald; and she was absurd enough to stop the carriage and inform him I was dangerously ill; — that you and Mamma were very uneasy on my account; — and I know not how many other absurdities!"

"I am happy at least to find that her information is as little to be depended upon on this occasion as on others!" said Augustus, rising to take leave, on observing the inauspicious coldness of Miss Berkely, of whom he stood considerably in awe. "Will you allow me," he continued, addressing Susan almost in a whisper, "to relieve all my doubts by a visit tomorrow? — At what hour will Lady Berkely be at home? — I know I am unworthy of much indulgence; but I must trust to you to procure me an interview."

Susan's reply was inaudible to her sister. It was doubtless satisfactory to their guest; for when he quitted the room, there was a smile of triumph on his face as he made his parting bow to Miss Berkely.

"And you have actually received this man back again, as if patiently waiting the ebb of his caprices!" cried she, throwing herself into a chair when the door closed after him.

"Don't scold me,—don't be angry!"—said Susan, too intensely happy to be much alarmed.

"You, who might still become the wife of an estimable,—an honourable man!—"

"Are not *all* gentlemen honourable men?"

"Since I became acquainted with those of Weald Park, I have been inclined to doubt it. And, as to this Mr. Augustus Hamilton —"

"Don't call him *Mister*," said Susan, coaxingly; "and don't speak so loud when you talk about him!"

"What *am* I to call him?—Augustus, or 'my dear brother?'—thank him for his courtesy in recollecting us at last,—and acknowledge myself convinced by his lame excuses?"

"No!—so far, at least, I can compel you to do him justice. He has attempted no excuses. I scarcely know what Penelope may have ventured to suggest to him. But he seemed so shocked to find me looking ill, that I fear he is tolerably aware of the anxious hours I have suffered on his account."

"What a humiliation!"

"You will be very angry with me!—I have not told you the worst. I have not *your* self-command;—I *could* not assume a look of displeasure when I so truly rejoiced at seeing him again. He came in unannounced. The surprise was too much for me. Forgive me!" continued Susan, throwing her arms round her sister's neck.

"Not another word!" cried Miss Berkely, gently disentangling herself. "I see how it is. I shall have this heartless puppy imposed upon my affections, and have to love him for your sake.—Oh! my dear, dear sister!" cried she, a thousand painful reflections rushing upon her mind and urging her to further remon-

strance, "reflect upon what you are about, before you pledge yourself irrevocably. I do not ask you to resent the past. I will even suppose that Mr. Hamilton's conduct towards yourself has been faultless. But think for a moment what he is to others! — A sneering son, — a careless brother, — a bad master, — a bad friend! — Fed upon the contributions of the people, yet looking down with contempt upon their miseries; scornful towards all the world, without a single quality to justify his pride; — nay, talking of life itself as if the Divinity who made it had no share in his reverence! — You cannot, you must not, give your affections to such a man! — To *me*, his cold-blooded inhumanity is worse than vice."

" You are unjust and unreasonable," said Susan; still under the fascination of Hamilton's return and all the happiness it created. " He may appear unamiable; for, living among heartless people, he has caught their tone, and found no sympathy for his natural affections. You do not know him!"

" Would to Heaven my knowledge might never be increased!"

" Can you say so, when you know how eagerly Mamma's wishes and my affections are fixed upon this marriage!"

" Marriage?" groaned Marcia. — " Is there *no* hope left?"

" None! — I have given my word! — *Do* wish me joy, even if you do not think I deserve it!"

" You do deserve it, dearest; you do deserve it. You are only too generous, — too confiding! It is because you are so slow to believe in the existence of wickedness, that you would trust your happiness, your person, the purity of your mind, to the keeping of one who despises all things good and holy; — Oh!

Susan, dear Susan — do not marry Augustus Hamilton! — You are not prepared for such a companion, — for such a fate. You will become a miserable woman! — Let me entreat, — implore you!"

" You terrify me! — You destroy the happiness of these first happy moments," faltered Susan; " but you do not diminish my affection for Augustus."

" Affection for a man whom you do not and cannot esteem! — Only suspend your decision. Only wait for my brother's return. Wait till you have seen more of Hamilton. It would break my heart to know that you had already accepted him!"

Poor Susan was spared a reply. Her mother was already in the room; having gathered enough from their two last sentences to experience no other drawback to her delight at the accomplishment of her wishes, than the ire produced by Marcia's officious counsels and interference. Her eldest daughter was condemned to silence, — her youngest locked in her arms! —

" It is all over!" whispered Miss Berkely to her sister, as she gave her, with a heavy heart, her nightly kiss when they retired to rest that evening. " Since you have made up your mind to become the wife of Augustus Hamilton, you have no further opposition to apprehend from *me*. Henceforward, dearest Susan, I will learn to look upon him as a brother."

CHAP. XI.

Oh ! that deceit should steal such gentle shape,
And with a virtuous visor hide deep vice.

Richard III.

IT could not but occur to Marcia (among the numerous perplexities rendering her pillow sleepless) that nothing could be stranger on the part of an accepted lover, than to have postponed till the morrow his appeal to the authority of Lady Berkely. Susan's explanation, which was of course his own, did not satisfy her : "To have quitted Everleigh the day following his arrival, at a moment's notice, would have provoked the curiosity of the Cadogans ; and, perhaps, produced a general circulation of the truth before his letter to his father reached Brighton." For, at present, Mr. Hamilton knew nothing of his intentions ; and he admitted that it would require time and persuasion to reconcile him to his disappointment on the subject of Lady Ashley.—But all this cautious prudence was not in Augustus Hamilton's natural character ; and Marcia's heart misgave her.

Had she but known,—could Susan but have dreamed, —with what different views he had been dragged by the two fair inseparables, Lady Ashley and Mrs. Cadogan, into Northamptonshire!—It is true that, from the first moment of his acquaintance with Susan, he had been deeply impressed with the beauty of her person and disposition. He had told her so, without caring what impression the declaration might produce in return : fancying that his father was responsible for the unmatrimonial nature of his views. He even

rejoiced at old Hamilton's sudden determination to visit Brighton ; seeing that he was advancing further with Susan than was safe ; *i.e.* further than the point whence he might find it easy to secure a retreat.

He had no doubt she loved him ; but he was accustomed to be loved. — He had no doubt she would forget him ; for he had been often forgotten, and did not estimate the distinction between Susan and those women of the world to whom he had hitherto devoted his homage. He had even made up his mind not to endanger her happiness and his own liberty by again returning to Weald ; and had been betrayed into his *impromptu* visit to Everleigh by the malicious plotting of Caroline Cadogan and her friend ; who little anticipated that, within four-and-twenty hours of his arrival, the active tongue of Pen. Smith would inform him that poor dear little Susan Berkely was dying of a consumption ; “ which, between themselves, was attributed to a disappointment in love, — nay, that it was thought she had not six weeks to live ! ”

Heartless as he was, Hamilton was greatly shocked ! — He made his way instantly to Green-Oak ; learned from the servant that Susan was at home and alone ; and entered unannounced and stood beside her work-table to enjoy the start, — the exclamation, — the blush, — the burst of tears, which told him how deeply his absence had been felt, — how deeply his return was appreciated. There was no Marcia at hand to inspire self-command. Susan's whole heart was in her face, and that face was the face of an angel. He pleaded, — she listened, — and her resentments were forgotten ; so that, at the end of half an hour, nothing was wanting but his father's consent to make them the happiest couple in the world.

Before he visited Green-Oak, the following morning

this had been formally applied for ; and it was calculated by the ever-calculating Lady Berkely, that, in the course of four days, an answer might be received. He was mistaken. In the course of *three*, Mr. Hamilton himself made his appearance !— The official man was keenly alive to the advantage of *vivâ voce* explanations. He had been so long accustomed, moreover, to “rise to explain,” that he found it difficult to accomplish such an evolution in a sitting position. He was accordingly standing with his back to the dining-room fire, with an ill-omened looking travelling-cap on his head, when the happy lover returned from the cottage, to dress for dinner.

The explanation was a strong one. Thirty years of public life, however, had imposed such restraints on Mr. Hamilton’s naturally impetuous temper, that he did not follow the custom of English fathers on the English stage, by rating his son and heir as his butler might have rated the footman after a drunken holiday. But the bitter, cutting sarcasms of a worldly tongue are more difficult to bear than an outburst of vulgar indignation ; and Augustus was forced to listen in furious silence, while his father coolly recapitulated his follies and enormities,— his debts,— his gallantries,— his gambling,— his selfishness,— his ignorance,— his incompetence,— his uselessness,— his ingratitude ! — It was a fearful moment. The father insulting his worthless son ;—the son, secretly despising the scornful father. One reply, however, was uttered audibly enough. The more Mr. Hamilton reviled him, the more obstinately Augustus announced his resolve to persist in his engagement to Susan Berkely.

“ I have pledged my word,” was his sullen and reiterated answer.

“ You have pledged it on other occasions, when it

proved no *very* effectual bond!" observed his father, with equal *sang-froid*.

"Congratulate me then on the amendment of my morals!" said Augustus, sneeringly. "For once, Sir, I am about to perform an honourable action."

"At the suggestion of Sir Edmund Berkely's expected return to England?" rejoined Mr. Hamilton, hoping to irritate the young man out of his self-possession.

"At the suggestion of my own inclination," replied Augustus with a kindling eye, but in a phlegmatic tone: "which, as you must be tolerably aware, I am accustomed to treat with the greatest respect. Let us understand each other, Sir!—I WILL marry Miss Berkely, say or do what you please. I may have behaved like a villain elsewhere; *here*, allow me to retrieve myself. Your influence with government has, luckily, provided me with competence: and you have therefore to choose between provoking a family rupture and the exposure of your affairs for the amusement of the world; or such a compromise as will enable me to afford to your daughter-in-law a place in society worthy of her and yourself."

Augustus paused; and, instead of a rejoinder, Mr. Hamilton fixed his eyes contemplatively on the opposite wall. He had assumed the pacific attitude of "*Château qui parle et femme qui écoute.*" A surrender was no longer hopeless.

"You will admit, my dear father," proceeded Augustus, "that your peerage is too safe to require any reinforcement of your interest; and as to fortune, although Miss Berkely's is almost too trifling for mention to *you*, whose income counts more than double the amount of the principal, you must not forget that she is prudent, economical, unexacting —"

"A country girl, without tact, without address!"

"Ask any of the people who were staying here last autumn (except that venomous gnat Varden), and they will tell you that Lord Shetland and your friend Lord Baldock thought her prettier and more elegant than Julia. The Marquis was always by her side."

A new light seemed to break in upon the official man. His stony face grew more complacent as he listened.

"The presence of female society is indispensable to a house like yours. My sister's marriage would have deprived it of its chief attraction in the eyes of those whom you are fond of conciliating. Even this new peerage, of which you think so much, what is it in the throng of London society, unless made prominent by the wealth, wit, or beauty of its representatives!"

"I see how it is," said Hamilton, affecting to cede to the force of destiny. "I, who have sacrificed myself, my whole life long, to the interests of my children, shall be compelled to sanction a measure I totally disapprove. Such prospects as you and Julia have thrown away!—My daughter, refusing Claneustace to marry a good-looking fool with his maintenance at the ministers' mercy: my son, neglecting a woman of Lady Ashley's property to marry —"

"A beautiful girl, the daughter of a man whose monument the nation has placed in St. Paul's —"

"And whose widow, in the pension list!"—

"Their connections and descent being every way superior to our own!"

"Let us say no more of it," cried Hamilton. "Since you are determined to marry without my consent, it is useless to withhold it. I wished to do better for you: you reject my good offices. But, however mortified by your obstinacy and ingratitude, I

have no desire to gratify the ill-nature of such people as Eardley, Varden, and Lady Leighton, by the spectacle of my wounded feelings. Since this cursed marriage *must* take place, let us make the best of it."

"My dear father —"

"The sooner the preliminaries are adjusted the better," said Hamilton, cutting short his son's effusion of sentiment. "My man of business will draw out proposals such as ought to content the mother. You will reside in my house, if it suit your convenience; and your wife must content herself with two hundred a year pin-money."

"She would content herself, I am sure, with *less*!" cried Augustus, in a moment of enthusiasm.

"No! The concession is made to my own credit in the eyes of the world, not to the young lady's pleasure," replied his father. — "You may order five hundred pounds' worth of jewels on my account at Storr and Mortimer's; and let your new carriage be built by my coachmaker: a barouche, if you please, — for Mrs. Hamilton will have the use of my town equipage while she lives under my roof."

These gratuities, which, between any other son and father, would have been accorded with grace and received with gratitude, were announced by the arid-minded Hamilton in the tone of a Chancellor of the Exchequer giving out the items of the budget, and accepted with a misgiving air by his supercilious son.

"I am unfortunately engaged to the Berkelys this evening," said Augustus, looking at the clock, as if anxious to escape from a family scene; "and, as I cannot venture to beg you will accompany me —"

"And why not?" interrupted Mr. Hamilton. "Do you suppose that, having once given my consent to this imprudent match, I am not prepared to go through

the ceremonies usual on such occasions?—Do you imagine I would lend occasion to those cackling idiots at Laxington to send a whisper into the world, through the Tottenhams, that I had been deficient in courtesy to the family of my daughter-in-law?—No, no!—Pray do not allow such people as the Smiths and Mangleses to despise us for ill-breeding, whatever other bad quality they may have discovered in the family.”

In pursuance of his system of conciliation, Mr. Hamilton was shortly afterwards seated on Lady Berkely's sofa, in all the respectability of his white hair and suit of sables;—charming her with his high-bred bow, his mild suavity of accent, his Treasury smile, his deference to herself, his paternal tenderness to her daughter. But the hypocrite was taken in his own snare. He became really pleased with Susan. He was struck, for the first time, with the singular grace of her manners. He felt that he should be proud of her; that she would embellish his circle, and do honour to his name. There was nothing to be ashamed of in the connection. Lady Berkely, though a bore, was a woman of distinguished appearance. Marcia was majesty itself.—Altogether, for a bad match, it *had* its extenuations.

CHAP. XII.

Boniface. — They're full of money, and pay double for every thing. They know that we paid good round taxes for the making of 'em; and so they are willing to reimburse us a little.—*Beaux Stratagem.*

THE crisis of acceptance past, courtships become tiresome things to witness or describe, especially when

roses and nightingales are out of season. The happy couple were tormented by the usual congratulatory visits ; till the acceleration of the marriage was earnestly pressed by the Hamiltons ; by the son, because eager to quit the neighbourhood of Laxington and its gossips ; by the father, because he could not allow his private affairs to interfere with the duties of the session.

As soon, therefore, as the handsome *trousseau*, with which Lady Berkely foolishly attempted to emulate Mr. Hamilton's generosity, could be completed, the ceremony took place. The bride and bridegroom found their path to church inauspiciously strewed with snowdrops by the children of Miss Berkely's Sunday school. The old women assembled in the churchyard, observed, as is commonly observed at weddings, that the bride looked like an angel. Lady Berkely was all smiles, — Susan all tears, — Marcia (poor Marcia) absorbed in profound affliction. She could not bear the match, — she could not bear the people with whom they were about to be connected. She looked on the whole Hamilton set as mere puppets in a pageant. There was nothing solid, nothing estimable, nothing trustworthy about them. And how little was her gentle confiding sister prepared to secure her happiness in such a circle !

If any one enjoyed the wedding cake of Mr. and Mrs. Augustus Hamilton without a drawback, it was Penelope Smith.

“ Lord, Lord ! my dear Mrs. M.,” cried she, as they discussed the ceremony of the day that evening at the Vicarage. “ Doesn't it seem but yesterday I dropped in here to bring you the news that Weald was going to be let ? And don't you remember, (I recollect it as well as possible,) you were sitting there in the window, with the spectacle case in your hand, looking out into

the garden at Jem Riley, who was sweeping away the grass, (the first mowing of the season,) ‘ If this Mr. Hamilton has a family,’ said I, ‘ perhaps one of the Berkelys may pick up a match.’ And in my heart, I’m sure I wished it might be Miss Susan. I *must* say, from the first of the family coming to Green-Oak, I took a fancy to Miss Susan. It always ran in my head she would belong to the neighbourhood. I remember writing word so to Sophia Burtonshaw ! To be sure I had my notions about Mr. Bernard. But he was too bookish and grave for her. And now, you see, she’s to be my Lady Laxington ! Yes, ma’am, my Lady Laxington ! Last time my brother was over for the audit at Tottenham Park, my lord as good as told him (but in strict confidence, and I should not mention it, my dear Mrs. M., out of this house) that Mr. Hamilton of Weald was to be made Lord Laxington ; that one of his objects in taking Weald was as a sort of claim to the name ; and the Tottenham family were very well pleased. ‘ Lady Laxington ! ’ Don’t it sound quite neighbourish and pleasant ? Somehow or other, I shouldn’t have liked the title to go to a stranger ; and, though I never had any very great partiality to the old gentleman, who really took upon him very much here, considering he was a stranger in the county, (I have seen the Weald Park barouche drive up to the church-door, ma’am, after service, before Mr. Forbes’s charott, who has been settled at the Manor since the time of Edward the Sixth ; Dr. Mangles says bloody Mary, but Mrs. Warren has a paper to show, and holds to Edward the Sixth,) I can’t but own, I’m glad we’re to have such a sweet pretty creatur’ as Miss Susan presented at court, some day or other, as ‘ Lady Laxington.’ I wish we may live to see it, my dear ma’am ; and, between friends, I don’t

know but that I had some little hand in the match. If you'd seen Mr. Augustus's face, ma'am, that day I met him on the Everleigh road, and told him poor Miss Susan Berkely was in a galloping consumption — Lord ! you might have knocked him off his horse with a feather."

"Are you not under a mistake *there?*" insinuated the mild Mrs. Mangles. "I'm told Mrs. Cadogan brought him down with her to Everleigh, expressly to make his proposals; on a hint from her mother, to whom Miss Berkely made known the cause of her sister's indisposition."

"Well now, I really thought, my dear Mrs. M., you knew Mrs. Warren better than to fancy they were on terms for anything of the kind!—Lor' bless you! Ever since Caroline's marriage, there has been as much coldness and ceremony between 'em, ma'am, as between a queen and a lady in waiting."

"Then it was good Mr. Forbes himself who wrote to his niece!—Because, you know, he always wanted to break off the business between Miss Susan and Mr. Bernard; and so long as the young lady was single —"

"Mr. Forbes write a letter ! Why, the two last notes I sent him to ask leave for parties to go and see St. Margaret's (poor Diaper of the High Street and his family, who spent the day there when he married his niece), the answers were written by John Humphries, my dear ma'am. Mr. Forbes would as soon think of writing a petition to parliament, as a letter to Mrs. Cadogan."

"Well, well, the match is made now, and what signifies how ? It is a very comfortable thing for both families. Mr. Hamilton told the Dr. in the vestry this morning, his son had formed a connection to his

heart's content ; and made him a compliment of twenty guineas, which was very handsome ! ”

“ Pity Miss Julia was married at Brighton ! ” insinuated Penelope. “ I suppose, however, when summer comes, we shall have them all back, and gay doings at Weald. God grant Miss Susan may not have her little head turned among so many grand folks. The Marquis of Shetland as free and easy in the house, I am told, as I am here ! ”

“ I hope Mrs. Augustus Hamilton will introduce different ways, in some respects,” said the vicaress. “ The day I dined at the park, ma'am,—but I recollect, you were of the party,—they sat me down to short whist ; and before I could look round, I'd lost ten shillings. I can't abide short whist. Give *me* play for my money.”

“ I hope Mrs. Augustus will introduce somebody there to make a match for her sister,” observed Pen. “ I've sometimes half a mind to think of her for Mr. Bernard. But Lady B. is so flighty, I doubt whether she would like it ; more particularly now she is going to be made mother-in-law to a young man whose father is going to be made a peer. Well, well, all is not gold that glitters ! Talk to *me* of a good old county family (as I was saying to Mrs. Cadogan t'other day) ; a family whose coaches have been seen at Northampton races ever since the races was races. Thank goodness, the Laxington neighbourhood made a tolerable show there, long before we'd any acquaintance to claim with either Berkelys or Hamiltons.”

“ One can't have every thing ! ” observed the philosophical Mrs. Mangles, rolling up a thin slice of bread and butter, and dipping it into her tea. “ The family at Weald have got places and pensions ; and now they

are going to be made lords and ladies. I don't see much to complain of; and I'm sure I don't want to complain."

CHAP. XIII.

Her being's law is gentle bliss,
 Her purpose and her duty;
And quiet joy her loveliness,
 And soft delight her beauty.

HARTLEY COLERIDGE.

THE tears on Mrs. Hamilton's Brussels lace veil were soon dry ; and, after a month's tour among the Westmoreland lakes, which (the chilliness of the season considered) the bridegroom would not have been sorry to reduce to a fortnight, he assured his wife they should make themselves a laughing stock to their acquaintance by prolonging their excursion. Honey-moons, like family mournings, have been abridged " by the authority of the Lord Chamberlain;" and it was only in deference to Susan's charming prejudices, that Augustus had been tempted to respect the old-fashioned custom of a month's seclusion.

Susan pleaded for a few days' visit to Green-Oak, before they settled in town. But Augustus laughed at the notion of " settling," when Weald was distant only a day's journey from London ; representing that his father was impatient for their arrival in Spring Gardens.

" His lordship is just now in the best of humours," said the bridegroom. " Ever since he enclosed me the Gazette announcing his elevation to the peerage,

he has abounded in lordly courtesy. Let us make the most of it! It disturbs the habits of his house that we should be absent, now the season has begun. He will not launch his new carriage till you are there to use it ; nor commence his official parties, nor do any thing he likes. I find he has taken an opera box for you, which is more than he did for Julia ; and the Duchess of Ptarmigan is to present you."

"But must I be presented, and go to the opera immediately ? Can we not be quiet, for a short time, till I get accustomed to London ?"

"As quiet as you please. But there is but one way of living, for people who live in the world. What shall we do with ourselves, if we neither go into society, nor receive it at home ? And how will you amuse yourself, when I am engaged at my club, or some official dinner ?"

"By waiting till your return," said Susan, smiling. "It will be quite occupation enough. And I hope to see a great deal of Julia. You forget what a kind letter your sister wrote me on our marriage."

"Julia will contrive to make *you* forget it, if you attempt to wean her from society."

"You are thinking of her as Miss Hamilton. But so attached as she is to Mr. Tottenham — "

"*You* are thinking of her as Miss Hamilton !" replied Augustus, laughing. "Julia is a rake at heart : and on that very account, she and Tottenham suit each other to a hair. They are very happy together ; but the *tête-à-tête* must take place in the midst of five hundred people. Julia cannot live without a blaze of lights and band of music. I doubt whether she would have been happy with Claneustace. The solemn grandeur of his family seat would have appeared dull to her. Julia must have her chat, her *écarté*, and in-

cessant movement around her. She would fidget *you* to death in a month."

"But you will be a great deal with me?" inquired Susan, looking anxiously at her husband.

"Unless when I have engagements. In town, one has *always* some engagement or other."

"But shall we not reside *sometimes* in the country?"

"We shall pass our autumns at Weald; where you will be near your mother and sister."

"*That* will be delightful!" cried Susan.

"My father is stocking the preserves at Weald," said the bridegroom, more cheerfully. "They have turned out two hundred brace of pheasants this breeding season. The shooting *was* deuced bad; and Shetland and Baldock, and several others of my father's colleagues, will not go any where without being sure of sport. He is doing a great deal for the place, considering it is not his own. But if it were not for Laxington and that cursed neighbourhood, Weald would be a liveable place enough, during the shooting-season."

"The neighbourhood is not always so quiet as when you knew it last year," observed his wife. "Lady Ashley has archery meetings, at Stoke, and all sorts of pleasant parties. Mrs. Cadogan, too, is tired of living so much abroad, and intends to reside more at Everleigh for the future. You do not seem to like Mrs. Cadogan? Is it because she is Bernard Forbes's cousin, or because she was a witness to your Brighton flirtation with Lady Ashley?"

"I like her very well; and Cadogan is a good sort of gentlemanly fellow; with nothing to say and nothing to do, and fulfilling both duties entirely to his own satisfaction."

"You will find that *she* has a great deal to say,

when you are more intimate," said Susan. "Caroline is reserved, but has a great deal of cleverness. My sister is not fond of her, and sides with Mrs. Warren. But how was it possible for a beautiful, light-hearted girl, to resign herself to such a home as Fir Grove, or such a husband as her cousin?"

"No doubt she was quite right; and I hope she will prove an acquisition to us," yawned Augustus. "And now, like a dear girl, go and put on your habit, and let us take our farewell ride to Honistar Crag. For I have ordered post-horses for to-morrow, and written my father word we shall dine in Spring Gardens on Wednesday evening."

The ride to Honistar Crag was delightful to Susan; —the journey to London, delightful to Augustus. Every mile which took them nearer to town increased his hilarity. Other men, equally experienced in its habits, might have felt a passing qualm at surrendering to the school of fashion a pupil so pure, so innocent, so docile as his wife. But he was either too much absorbed in self to think of *her*; or believed her, like Milton's Lady, too severely guarded by chastity, to undergo any danger from the attacks of Comus and his crew.

Meanwhile Lord Laxington received the young couple with a degree of cordiality becoming the occasion. It was his cue to be courteous; but he was, in all sincerity, pleased to welcome them to town. A lady was indispensable to his table, to fill up the measure of his daily existence; and there were certain ex-official political duties, in which the assistance of his son was highly useful. The Hon. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton formed a sort of corollary to the respectability and dignity of his establishment. The English are ever fondest of a minister of domestic habits.

They loved Perceval the better for being a trifle hen-pecked. It is not of one of their own lawgivers they would exclaim

Curse on his virtues ! They've undone his country.

Lord Laxington was therefore satisfied that, being a widower, he could not more securely mollify the hearts of his countrymen than by appearing in public accompanied by a beautiful daughter-in-law. He was pleased to observe that her bloom had lost nothing among the Westmoreland breezes ; and that the society of Augustus had insensibly communicated to his wife the air of nonchalance characteristic of the profession of Exclusivism. He even admitted that she was far more distinguished-looking than Mrs. Tottenham. His lordship might possibly have accorded the palm to his daughter, had she been Marchioness of Claneustace : as it was, the scale was in Susan's favour.

It is true, his admiration was for a moment diminished by the listlessness with which the pretty bride cast her eyes around her, on entering the magnificent suite of rooms prepared for her reception. There seemed to be both want of tact and taste in her indifference to the thousand costly trifles with which he had adorned her boudoir and dressing-room. Lord Laxington did not perceive that, while apparently gazing upon the Dresden frame of her dressing-glass, she was engrossed by the reflection it served to convey to her eyes of her husband's remote figure ; Augustus having loitered behind in the ante-room, to hurry through the contents of a handful of letters, which awaited his arrival in town. What could constitute their pressing urgency ?— They could not be letters of business, for the whole of his debts had been discharged by his father on his marriage. Instead of welcoming her to

the room in which so much of their future life must pass together, he was consequently smiling over idle notes of congratulation or invitation! But the billets were soon finished, and thrust into his pocket: and Augustus made his appearance, as full of gratitude and enthusiasm as his father could desire; to enlarge upon Lord Laxington's generosities, and point out to his wife's admiration the care with which her favourite books and music had been collected, her conservatory furnished, and a door of communication opened between her dressing-room and that devoted to his use. Poor Susan was perhaps of opinion that she should have been more comfortable, more at her ease, surrounded by a degree of simplicity consonant with her early habits. But, as her husband seemed anxious to force upon her admiration the damask and gilding—bronze and ormolu,—mother-of-pearl and mosaic, which adorned her boudoir, she was liberal in her applause. Lord Laxington quitted the room ere the thanks of Augustus and his wife were half exhausted.

“And so, Susy, my father is actually going to make a pet of you!” cried young Hamilton, throwing himself on the sofa and bursting into laughter, so soon as the door was fairly closed on Lord Laxington. “*Est-il ridicule, ce cher Papa!*—When we men get into our second childhood, it is amazing what a vocation we betray for the toy-shop!”

“It is very kind of him to have taken so much pains for my accommodation,” said Susan, painfully startled by her husband’s sudden change of tone, from the cordiality assumed during Lord Laxington’s presence.

“Kind?—One of these days you will learn to know him better! Not an ell of brocade,—not an inch of rosewood,—was placed here on our account.”

"The furniture is new," replied Mrs. Hamilton, looking round, somewhat bewildered.

"*New* as yourself, my little wife; who have much ground to go over before you discover that my father's proceedings are invariably directed to the approbation of that great staring *œil de bœuf*,—the eye of the world! You and I have as much to thank him for, in these baubles, as the king his parliament, for the paraphernalia of a coronation! But *n'importe!* It is something to find the chancellor of our exchequer in good humour. And now, let us hasten to dress; for nothing worries his lordship more than being kept waiting for dinner. He cannot bear his soup to be cold, or his *chef* discountenanced. Wheeler has opened the imperials, I see. But do not bore yourself with finery. I looked into the dining-room as I passed, and saw only preparations for a straggler or two from the House. No company."

"Company?" reiterated Susan; to whom the idea of two or three strangers presented all the formalities of a dinner party. "Surely we shall be alone to-day? — the *first* day,— the ——"

"My father seldom dines alone during the session," replied Augustus carelessly, and feeling in his pocket for his letters. "Official dinners, at home or elsewhere, occupy two or three days of his week; and when we have no regular party, he usually brings home a man or two from the House of Commons. They get over a great deal of business in that way. It saves a monstrous deal of time."

"And shall we *never* be alone?" sighed Mrs. Hamilton, terrified by these prospects.

"Constantly, I trust!" replied her husband, kissing her forehead, as he glided into his own dressing-room. "But I am of my father's opinion, that the feeding

hour should be devoted to social enjoyment. People never talk so freely as while they are eating. A well-dressed dish seems at once to open the way to—I was going to say the heart—I meant, the mind. It was only in Solomon's time that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth became a speaker. Your heartless people are, now-a-days, your only orators!"

Susan looked grave.

"We will breakfast alone together every morning," cried Augustus, by way of atonement. "But we must live both with, and like, the rest of the world."

CHAP. XIV.

A man in all the world's new fashion planted,
That hath a mint of phrases in his brain,
One whom the music of his own vain tongue
Doth ravish like enchanting harmony.

SHAKSPEARE.

"You will not be bored with the household details of this establishment," observed Hamilton to his wife, the following morning. "Old Dawkins, my father's steward, is too great a man to be interfered with. You will have nothing to do, in short, dearest Susan, but to amuse yourself and love me. No very difficult task, I hope?" he continued, while examining the collection of great names on the cards left in Spring Gardens for Lord Laxington's daughter-in-law. "You must take care, love, that these people's cards are returned; and it shall be my task to make you acquainted with those I really wish you to know. With my father's political associates and their families, you

must, of course, be intimate ; though many of them are the last women in the world I would present to your notice."

"Then why *must* I ?"

"Because you will be constantly thrown into their society. Party influence is paramount even to the grand dogma of Exclusivism. We Tories are accustomed to stand shoulder to shoulder, and sink or swim together."

"But surely *you* are no great politician ? I have heard you speak so scornfully of parties and party-men !"

"In the abstract. But are you such a little goose as to be ignorant that party is our rock of anchorage — that we live by office, and starve by defeat, — tha we exist only by a long pull, a strong pull, and a pul altogether ?"

Susan heard only the first part of the sentence. There was something in the words "live or starve," which seemed to cast a gloom upon the gaudy trappings of the apartments. She looked round her with a glance that inferred, "Should we not be happier, poor and independent, than in splendid bondage such as this ?"

But Augustus saw nothing of the glance or its inference. He was watching out of the window a fight between two ragged boys in the Mall. Had he even seen and comprehended it, his reply would have been unequivocally negative. He had never been either poor *or* independent. He had no experience in such matters. His political fetters were second nature to him. He was a fox without a tail, but the appendage had been missing from his birth. He had been bred in the trammels of official life, just as the coachman's son is brought up a stable-boy. He looked upon

parties and politics as a mode or ceremonial of civilised life ; and upon office as a thing devised by potentates to enable a select portion of the community to enjoy their services of plate and opera-boxes.

"I am going to the Travellers' for an hour or two," said he,—(the fight having ended in one of the sturdy little vagabonds being carried senseless and bleeding from the field) "Will you drive with me by and by? — I will order the phaeton at five, and we can take a turn in the park."

But though poor Susan thankfully accepted the proposal, it struck her (*new* as he called her!) when Augustus had quitted the room, that, between the hours of twelve and five, there was leisure for something more than a lounge at the Travellers'. He had his father's library, and his own room to write his letters in, nor could she conceive that there existed, even at a fashionable club, public journals to be read, or private gossip to be gossipped, capable of occupying one hundred and twenty minutes, lawful time of Great Britain. She was not aware that men of the world have a peculiar standard of admeasurement for the subdivision of time and space.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Hamilton was unaccustomed to be left alone. From her christening to her marriage ceremony, she had never passed a day apart from her sister and mother. Miss Berkely's influence over her character and conduct had been proportionate to the superiority of her understanding; and nothing less miraculous than the all-potent spell of first love had enabled Susan, in a single instance, to think and act for herself. Her docile temper and yielding disposition seemed created for the support of constant companionship. She could do nothing without Marcia. Though passionately fond of music, the aid of her

sister's voice and hand were indispensable to bring out the powers of her own. She was accomplished in the use of the pencil ; but Marcia's taste was necessary to determine her choice of a subject. She was skilful in needlework ; but Marcia's voice, employed either in reading or conversing with her, had been the constant accompaniment of her industry.

And now, she had no longer Marcia to talk to,—no! not even to address by letter, with the unreserve which alone makes correspondence a substitute for nearer intercourse. For want of better amusement during their tour, Augustus had contracted a habit of reading her sister's letters ; and Susan was checked in commenting upon her new home or dwelling upon reminiscences of her old, lest Marcia's reply should contain observations offensive to the jealousy, or provocative of the ridicule of her husband. Hamilton was apt to laugh at what he considered the flightiness and romance of Miss Berkely's character ; and to express his amazement at the tendernesses exchanged between two sisters loving each other with a degree of affection such as his lukewarm feelings towards Mrs. Tottenham, and those of Julia in return, afforded him no precedent to comprehend. He regarded every thing as exaggerated and ridiculous which exceeded the barriers of ice erected by the Exclusives as a safeguard to their Arctic circle!

He had even advised his wife to avoid excessive intimacy with his own sister. "Julia and you differ so totally in character," said he, "that she will either convert you, or quarrel with you ; neither of which would suit me."

"We were very good friends in Northamptonshire."

"You had at that time no rival interests. She

had no cause to be jealous of your influence with my father."

"Nor has she now."

"William Tottenham is a sordid calculating fellow; and will put all sorts of fancies into her head. Prepare yourself to find no cordiality in either of them."

This denunciation afforded a cheerless prospect: and when, an hour or two after her husband's departure for the Travellers', Mrs. Tottenham was announced, the visit afforded no satisfaction to the bride. Expecting to find Julia cold and formal, she was amazed, however, at the vivacity with which her new sister ran into the room and embraced her!

"Little wretch that you are!" cried Julia, seizing her hand and dragging her through the rooms to admire the new arrangements. "To think that my father should take all this trouble and spend all this money on your account; and that too after paying Augustus's debts! As long as this was my school-room, an old mahogany table and six straw chairs were considered good enough for me and my French exercises! How I did always hate this room!—If it had not been metamorphosed, I should never have visited you, without fancying I heard Madame Pierrevaux's voice *grasseyan* her notes—explanatory of '*L'histoirre de Rrome!*'"

"Since it has lost its disagreeable associations," said Susan, leading her to the sofa, "I hope you will visit it often."

"I shall most likely come, whenever I have complaints to make about William," replied Mrs. Tottenham, laughing. "You will be obliged to listen to my grievances;—and, for the honour of the family, will not tell. It suits me vastly, Susan, that you should have married Augustus. He and I are too much alike

to care for each other; (our affection would have been mere egotism!) So I was obliged to reserve my sisterly love for his wife."

"*Tale quale?*"

"No! not *tale quale*, but such as I find her. I should have hated Lady Ashley, whom my father wanted him to marry; or Lady Laura Vaux, whom he oncee wanted to marry himself. Nor should I have liked your sister, who is too solemn and philosophieal for me, and moreover a shoeking Radical."

"Believe me —"

"My dear love, don't trouble yourself to defend her. She may be a St. Simonian, for any thing I care, so long as she is not Mrs. Hamilton. They say sisters-in-law fight, like Queen-bees, by intuition. But I do not take *you* to be a fighting character; which will save me all the time I might have lost in family squabbles."

"And why did you not come and meet me here, yesterday, at dinner?" inquired Susan, startled by the free and abrupt tone whieh the elegant hostess of Weald Park had aequired during a few months' assoeiation with the *roué* companions of William Tottenham.

"Because we never dine here unless sure of meeting a party, instead of those odious two or three parliamentary friends papa is so fond of. Judge what it used to be to sit at table, four days in the week, with men who never utter a syllable one cares to understand. I can't think how I lived through it."

"Sad eneouragement for *me!*"

"*You* have Augustus to amuse you:— *I* had nobody, unless when William now and then accompanied Lord Tottenham. And Papa was unreasonable enough to be angry with me for falling in love with the only

conversible Christian he ever brought into the house!"

"But if you never dine here, I trust you will often visit me in the morning?"

"Trust no such thing. Look upon my appearance here to-day as something extraordinary. I never pay morning visits."

"But coming to your own home cannot be called a morning visit?"

"Never mind what it is called. It is not to morning visits I have an antipathy. On the contrary, they amuse me extremely. In the Arks where that sort of Mrs. Shem-and-Mrs.-Japhet-ceremonial is kept up, one is sure to catch the echoes of all the scandal circulating in town. No! my dear Susan, it is only because I like better to stay at home!"

"You are growing domestic, then, in right earnest!" exclaimed the bride; brightening at the hopes of discovering a single kindred feeling in her sister-in-law.

"*Reste à savoir* how you interpret the word 'domestic.' I am fond of passing the morning in my pretty house in Brook Street, because I take care to fill it with the pleasantest people in town. I am at home, from breakfast till it is time to ride, to all the idlers of mine and William's acquaintance."

"Being 'at home' in your sense is the very reverse of being 'at home' in mine! I fear we shall not agree in our notions of domesticity."

"And when I tell you that I was playing whist till three o'clock this morning —"

"Whist!" reiterated Mrs. Hamilton, in whose mind that sober game was associated with the tea-parties of Laxington, the buzz-wig of Dr. Mangles, and the potter of Penelope Smith. "What in the world can have tempted you to play whist?"

"Partly my inclinations,—partly my sense of duty. What *am* I to do in society? A dancing matron is voted an intruder by the girls. I am, in fact, too old to dance, and too young to flirt."

"And is there no alternative but whist?"

"None, in the set with which I live. The Tottenhams do nothing else; and Lady Leighton, my friend and playfellow, is one of the best whist-players in town."

"Lady Leighton? Has she already forgiven you for not marrying Lord Claneustace?"

"She has, probably, forgotten that the thing was ever in question. But, having failed in teaching me to like her *protégé*, she has consoled herself with attaching me to whist."

"I wish she had been successful in her first attempt! There is nothing of which I have a greater horror than play."

"By which, of course, you mean gambling. But whist is not a game of chance; it is the pastime of statesmen and politicians. In becoming a capital player, I shall only exercise the latent genius of my father's daughter."

"How much must you have been living in Lady Leighton's society, to have acquired so much of her phraseology and way of thinking!"

"*Allez donc!*!" cried Mrs. Tottenham. "You fancy her an original. But she is only one of a *caste*. Come to me on one of my Monday nights, and I will show you two dozen such. But don't come, if you have made up your mind against whist; for we do nothing else; and bystanders, not interested in the game, chatter and make themselves disagreeable. You must get Augustus to teach you. Augustus is one of the finest players in London.—By the way, have you heard lately from your brother?"

"Edward is a bad correspondent. I have not yet received an answer to my apologies for not deferring my marriage to enable him to give me away."

"Then I can tell you news of him. Sir Edward Berkely is at Paris, travelling with Claneustace; from whom Lady Leighton had a letter the other day. They will be here in a fortnight. *En attendant*, how do you mean to amuse yourself?"

"I shall leave my plans of amusement to Augustus."

"Pray do no such thing!—It will afford him a precedent for interfering in your concerns; and he will introduce you to all the worst society in town. Men, who are worshippers of pretty faces, care not into what circle they throw themselves, in pursuit of the Cynthia of the minute."

"But you are not so unjust towards your brother, as to suppose he would degrade his wife by —"

"I suppose he would be heartily ashamed of his wife, if he thought she had not tact enough to choose her own acquaintance! But do not rely too far upon him."

"On what *am* I to rely!" ejaculated poor Susan, perceiving that she was approaching a shore, where pilotage or wreck is alike discreditable.

"Are you going to the opera to-night?" interrupted Julia, getting rather tired of her sentimental sister-in-law. "I hear you have a box?"

"Will *you* go with me?"

"*Impossible!*—All people have their domestic misfortunes. *Mine* is to accompany old Lady Tottenham twice a week to the opera. To be sure, she has one of the best boxes in the house. But there she sits, nailed like a scarecrow to the wall; wheezing so loud that one loses the *pianissimo* passages; and nodding

her feathers in quick time to the ballet, as if her turban were a fly-flap. However, it suits William to have one of her tickets ; and I doubt whether she would vouchsafe him one, unless for the pleasure of playing duenna to his wife. Good bye, Susan. I must hasten home, to be in time for my riding-party.—It is five o'clock."

" Five ? Augustus promised me to drive at five."

" You need not trouble yourself to put on your bonnet for the next half hour : he is too popular to be punctual. Augustus never kept an engagement in his life. His phaeton was waiting at the door, when I came in. Depend upon it, he will not be here till six."

" To take a morning drive !" ejaculated Susan, when Mrs. Tottenham quitted the room. " What difficult lessons have I to learn before I can play my part fitly among these strange people ! "

CHAP. XV.

The good old rule
Sufficeth them, the simple plan
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can.
WORDSWORTH.

A MONTH had scarcely elapsed, however, before Mrs. Hamilton was tolerably perfect in her new character. It is true, she had addressed herself with diligence to the study : — for Augustus made it clear to her that Lord Laxington had made it clear to *him*, her cues must be properly minded, and the business of the stage carefully rehearsed. His lordship had accepted

an almost dowerless daughter-in-law, and placed her, with kindness and courtesy, at the head of his establishment. It would have bored him extremely if, in return for all this, Susan had taken it into her head to regard him with filial tenderness. But he expected that she would mark her sense of gratitude by being always well dressed, and scrupulous in observing the etiquettes of society. He considered it the chief duty of his daughter-in-law to be one of the most fashionable women in town !

To look pretty was an easy task to a person possessed of the long light brown ringlets, the soft grey eyes, the gracefully turned head, the slender waist, the well poised figure, of Susan Hamilton. To be well-dressed, was scarcely more difficult to a person endowed with the wardrobe selected by Lady Berkely, and the jewel box presented by Lord Laxington. She was just of an age, of an air, of a character, to charm the eyes and ears of the world ; and a few hints from Augustus had already taught her when to come and when to go, — when to speak and when be silent, — so as to meet the wishes of his father : —

To whom to bow, whom take into her coach,

and whom into her friendship. Every day, she became more and more the fashion. “Laxington’s handsome daughter-in-law” was talked of in the House, in the Council, in the Court. Hamilton’s pretty wife was discussed at White’s, and the Steaks’, — at the Crockford’s, and the Travellers’. She had often the gratification to hear herself announced in a whisper as “daughter to that distinguished officer the late Sir Clement Berkely ;” and the king himself had referred to the connection, in the kindest and most flattering terms, when she was presented to his notice by the

grizzled, withered, but most aristocratic, her Grace the Duchess of Ptarmigan.

But Susan had achieved more than even these triumphs. She had learned to receive her husband, after his long mornings at the Club or Tennis Court, without troubling him with those importunate inquiries which, he assured her, were inadmissible among well-bred people. Nay!—she had overcome her Laxingtonian habit of being astonished. Whatever Lady Leighton might say (and her ladyship's sayings were often of an unprecedented nature)—whatever the Tottenhams might do (and their doings defied calculation), she had schooled herself to look on with an unmarvelling eye, if not with an unheightened complexion. Nothing now surprised her, unless the facility with which she was beginning to adopt such incongruous habits, and the rapidity with which she had been involved in the vortex of London. Mrs. Hamilton had anticipated a *gradual* initiation into the world of which she was henceforth to form a part. But lo!—the very first week, she had been presented not only to his Majesty, but to the most brilliant and remarkable portion of his Majesty's lieges. Lord Laxington's influential position in the most influential ministry ever harnessed to the Juggernaut of the state, served to enhance her importance as the wife of the most popular dandy ever enlisted in the brigade of the Exclusives. On her arrival in town, the season was commencing; and she was immediately included in the invitations of those to whose hospitality the coteries of London are supposed to be indebted for their brilliancy. The entertainments of Lord Laxington secured her a round of entertainments in return. Not a newspaper of the day but recorded the name of the Hon. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, as guests at some illus-

trious table; or as doing the honours of Spring Gardens to the Marquis of Shetland and my Lords A. B. C. and D.—It cost Pen. Smith a new pair of spectacles to pore over these chronicles of Susan's aggrandizement!

In all this flush of pleasure and prosperity, it must be admitted that there was something pleasingly at variance with the penurious gentility of Laxington, and the monotony of the Manor House,—nay, even of Green-Oak itself. The extensive ramifications of ministerial patronage brought Lord Laxington constantly before her in the character of a benefactor; and his lordship's benefactor, the Marquis of Shetland, in the character of a second providence. Day after day, she heard of favours conceded, privileges accorded, graces dispensed, families provided for. She dwelt at the fountain head of all manner of good gifts. The disappointed aspirants never came in view; the refusals were not recorded. She saw nothing but smiling faces; she heard nothing but traits of generosity, and effusions of gratitude.

Yet there were many things in her new mode of life which an uncorrupted nature pointed out as inconsistent and objectionable. So little was Mrs. Hamilton habituated to the details of public service, that she could not help attaching an idea of shabbiness to the prodigality with which public money and public agents were rendered subservient to the rise and convenience of those who are themselves, in a higher capacity, the servants of the public. Her father, indeed, had eaten the bread of the country, and her mother was still its pensioner. But the fate of the gallant Sir Clement sanctified the grant.

It was not so with the Hamiltons and Tottenhams, and twenty other families of their party. Some were

paid for doing nothing ; many, for doing very little ; yet certain of her new friends who were in the habit of proceeding from a late breakfast to their various offices, and quitting them at three o'clock to take a turn in St. James's Street, or lounge in the purlieus of the House on the chance of a division, were ever complaining of the severity of their duties, and grumbling for the arrival of the recess. The most overtasked weaver of Spital-Fields could not sigh more repiningly over his loom, for change of air, and relaxation of labour, than William Tottenham and Augustus, Commissioners of a lottery which had ceased to exist, and clerks to an office which had never existed. Liberally remunerated as deputies in a sinecure place the local habitation of which was a mystery even to their principal, they threw away the proceeds with as much pride and ostentation as if honestly earned ; and often did Susan shudder, on hearing them in the wantonness of their prosperity curse the people—“the damned people,—the besotted blackguard people,”—by the sweat of whose brows their own leisure was secured !

Another circumstance which appeared unaccountable, was the puerile nature of the conversation current among the eminent personages by whom she was surrounded. She had been startled, even at Weald Park, by the extreme levity of men whose names were of historical importance, and whose opinions of historical weight. But at Weald, the Marquis of Shetland, and his parasite, the pompous Earl of Tottenham, and Lord Tottenham's parasite, the Right Honourable George, and the Right Honourable George's parasite, Mr. Secretary Varden, were supposed to be playing holiday ; and had their privilege of private life to plead in extenuation of their bad puns, their indecent stories, their scandalous anecdotes, their wishy-washy

chit-chat. A somewhat comprehensive adoption of the Horatian precept was pardonable.

In London, on the contrary, within a stone's throw of the Treasury,—within oration-pitch of Palace-Yard,—within sight of Westminster Hall, of *Westminster Abbey*, it struck her that they ought to maintain the odour of officiality; that their counsel should be close, as a despatch box,—correct, as the draught of a Chancery bill—strong, as a ministerial majority. They appeared at Lord Laxington's table, with all the blushing honours of the Privy Council thick upon them,—with the breath of Majesty in their nostrils,—with the creaking of the door of the cabinet lingering in their ears,—or with the cheers of their packed jury, the House, still louder and more portentous. Yet the graver the crisis, the more trifling their discourse!—Poor Susan was shocked, amazed, *overcome*, by their pleasantries. She knew that death-warrants decreeing the fate of guilty individuals, and measures involving the destiny of guiltless thousands, were passing through the hands she saw upraised in rapturous applause of some half-naked opera-dancer; and wondered that men who treated as a jest the balance of power, should affix so much importance to the *à plomb* of a *pirouette*. While peace or war was agitating the minds of the nation, the nation's guardians were discussing the spicing of a sauce, or the physicking of a favourite racer!

“ Do you know that you have been vastly amusing to-night, my dear Mrs. Hamilton ? ” observed George Eardley, one evening at Sir Joseph Leighton's; where Susan had been listening in mute amazement to Lord Tottenham's rhapsodies touching a Greenwich fish-dinner, at which he had been present the day before.

“ *C'est à peu de frais !* ” said Lady Leighton, “ for

she has not opened her lips, except to sip her coffee,—the empty cup of which you have not the grace to take from her hand."

"Ask Peregrine Varden whether he do not consider a woman endowed with such powers of audition, as worthy twenty declamatory De Staëls or eloquent Madame Rolands!" cried Eardley; nodding to the groom of the chambers to receive the coffee cup with which he was too lazy to interfere.—"Mrs. Hamilton has been sitting silent in her corner of the sofa these two hours;—like the Speaker of the House, or President of *la Chambre*,—'all ear,' and much bemused by our waste of words.—Now, *do* tell me (as candidly as can be expected of a Portia whose gown is made by *Palmyre*), to whom do you decree the prize of oratory?—to Lord Tottenham, for his luminous exposition of the difficulty of garnishing fried perch with fried parsley, without risking the delicate flavour of the fish;—or to Lord Baldock, for his statesman-like illustration of the folly of Chifney's doubling upon Mr. Stonehewer's bay filly, when the thing was already won hollow;—or to Sir George, for his evidence that Brocard's *entrechat* is three *battemens* higher than that of Pauline Leroux;—or to Billy Tot, for his lively sketch of his own *naiseries* at the Theatrical Fund dinner?—Your attention to the debate has been praiseworthy, be your vote impartial:—Don't look alarmed. It shall be *scrutin secret*. I will not betray your confidence."

"Colonel Eardley seems anxious to persuade us," said Peregrine Varden, who was a general overhearer of other people's conversations, "that you expected to find Lord Laxington's circle assembled in a sort of crown and sceptre junta, like the frontispiece to the twelfth night characters;—their soup seasoned with

pounce, and their small talk with Machiavelism;—that you fancied a Pietro Aretino in Lord Baldock, and formed your ideal of Lord Shetland, as an Alberoni in a suit of Saxon cloth!—Will you give me leave to assure him, in your name, that you did *not* expect too much, and have not found too little?"

"There is nothing I am less ashamed of than my ignorance of the world," said Mrs. Hamilton, replying to both her assailants at once.

"*World!*"—reiterated Eardley. "Have *you* too begun to affix the name of world to the little adder's nest twisting and coiling within this narrow drawing-room?"—

"Have the civility to remember that the drawing-room is mine, and do not call it names!" interposed Lady Leighton.

"I remember, at least, that one of its leading politicians is your property. And behold him, coming to plead his own cause. Be 'Physician, heal thyself!'—parodied by 'Mr. Attorney General, defend yourself!' Room in the Court for Sir Joseph Leighton, intent upon completing Mrs. Hamilton's contempt for politics and public men!"—

CHAP. XVI.

Vous êtes bien bon de vous occuper des grands hommes. J'en ai vu de près deux ou trois. C'étaient de sots personnages!—
PAUL LOUIS COURIER.

BUT Susan's soul was imbued with neither the meanness nor the nobleness of scorn. She despised neither the little nor the great. She had generosity to overlook failings, as well as "to fancy merit where she saw it not;"—"to find sermons," in the inane prose of

Lord Tottenham, and “good in every thing,” even in the servility of the toady Peregrine Varden.

She still, indeed, tendered her sex’s reverence to one or two of the great men by whom she was surrounded. The Marquis of Shetland, for instance, commanded all her respect. Women are apt to revere, as the pious are said to rejoice, *with trembling*. They dearly love the despot whose despotism they denounce. From the omnipotent Sultan, to the petty tyrants of May Fair, Blue Beard is sure of his Odalisques!

And the Marquis of Shetland was positiveness personified. Self-reliance is the attribute at once of the dunce and the man of genius. But Shetland was the very genius of obstinacy;—wilful in a whisper,—absolute in the *pas grave* of the court minuet. His “I will” was peremptory as the bluff Harry’s;—his coolness, cool as the impassibility of Talleyrand. But he was misplaced in date and office. He had missed his century. Shetland would have been the man to control with a gauntletted hand the jarring princes of a crusade in the middle ages;—or, in the passing time, to reduce to discipline, by summary justice, a gang of desperadoes in the Abruzzi; snapping his fingers in the face of the Pope and his guards, yet whispering the secrets of his soul in the ear of some mercenary Dalilah, or the wily capuchin, her confessor and his own!

But what could such a man excite but mutiny and irritation in the minds of that mighty nation, whose multitudes were already seething and boiling into one of those great moral hurricanes which mark the epochs and transitions of civilisation, as storms are supposed to accompany the changes of the moon?—a man who stood like Canute on the shore, bidding the waves “be still,” instead of warning the timid into shelter, and

instructing the bold but inexperienced to buffet with the billows? There were pilots watching the waters, better versed than himself in the mystery of those breakers, who laughed his fool-hardiness to scorn!

His lordship's career, however, had been one of high and merited renown; and the decision of his tone and character gave him unlimited advantage with Mrs. Hamilton. To *her* it seemed as if he *could* not talk so positively without being in the right. Nineteen years' acquaintance with mankind, or study of their works, did not suggest to her gentle mind that no laws should be immutable, but those engraven on the tables of stone,—no principles invariable, save those of divine inspiration:—that the order of government must vary from age to age,—in nation and nation,—climate and climate,—according as the Creator himself has varied the nature and perfection of his works:—that to provoke the fury of a national crisis and play the sturdy oak when winds are blowing that threaten destruction to the millions sheltered under its branches, is a weakness weaker than the pliancy of the reed, which bends to every passing breeze. Poor Susan, who saw in Shetland a triton of the minnows disporting in the dancing waters around her, the strengthener of their feebleness and controller of their irregularities, was careful not to confound him with such creatures as Lord Tottenham,—the Friar Tuck of the bold Robin of the state; or with Lord Baldock, the Will Scarlett of his company;—or with Varden, the little John, or universal Jack of *every* company wherein he was permitted to ply his long bow!

Next to the Marquis, perhaps, her admiration rested with her father-in-law. Lord Laxington was more active in public life, more guarded in private, than the rest of his party; for he had more to accomplish in

the construction of his fortunes. He had neither fame, like the Marquis of Shetland, nor wealth, like Lord Tottenham, nor ancient rank, like Lord Baldock, to form his buckler in the sight of the multitude ; and there was consequently no room for relaxation in his adroitness, good breeding, activity, and serviceability. He was neither a very fine instrument, nor a very strong one. But a tool that can be adapted to all purposes and is ever at hand, becomes the Cabinet-maker's favourite blade ; and his lordship accordingly took care that no rust should accumulate on his polish, and that his edge should be always fit for action. Susan saw not the motive. She beheld only the result ; and joined with the rest of London in asserting that Lord Laxington was the best informed, best bred, and most agreeable man of his age ; the epitome, in short, of an accomplished courtier of those other times and countries, whose corruption possessed, at least, the merit of refinement.

But Mrs. Hamilton did not, as yet, discern the fearful worldliness of Lord Laxington's character,—his moral atheism,—his incredulity of virtue. She saw not that the same *besoin de parvenir* which degraded Peregrine Varden into a vulgar sycophant and *pique-assiette*, had elevated the Right Hon. George into the Rochester of Carlton House and its epicurean prince. She suspected not that Lord Laxington admitted no system of rewards or punishments, save those dependent on the smile or sign-manual of a sovereign ; or that he looked on the people of England as a feeder looks on the hounds whose sleekness and staunchness serve to get his wages raised ; but who may cause him to be turned out of the kennel, should their yelping grow too clamorous or their bones too gaunt.

These motives and peculiarities were indiscernible

on the polished surface of the society of which she formed a part. All she saw was brilliant and auspicious ; all she heard, plausible and soothing ; all she tasted, sweet and luxurious. It was a round of feasting and frivolity. The scene was specious, the spectacle enchanting. She knew nothing of the traps and pulleys and mechanical business of the stage. Fifty beautiful villas were appropriated to the joyous band ; hundreds of magnificent country seats, and mansions in town, were by inheritance their own. If a public festival took place,—a race, a review, a launch, an installation,—the best houses in the neighbourhood canvassed the honour of receiving them as guests. Royal boxes at the theatres, royal lodgments in the palaces, royal privileges in the parks, were placed at their disposal. “Nunký paid for all !” The purse of the nation seemed to be as that of Fortunatus ; and though the Hamiltons and the rest of their party would have been horror-struck at the idea of “robbing the Exchequer,” they had no objection to stand under the sieve of ministerial influence, and allow the golden shower to filter upon their heads.

“What is the matter ?” inquired Susan, one morning, some months after her marriage, of Mrs. Tottenham, on entering the drawing-room in Brook Street, and discovering what she interpreted to be the symptoms of a family quarrel ; for William was lying extended in his chintz dressing-gown on the sofa, with his feet and their Turkish slippers resting on the back of a chair ; while Julia, in an absent fit, was pinching open the buds of a fine exotic.

“Nothing particular !” sighed she. “Only William is in waiting next week, and horribly bored at having to go down to Windsor, instead of joining the party at Romsey Lodge, for Epsom races. It is really

too provoking ! For he won't let me go without him : and so we are all out of sorts."

" *Sorts!* " reiterated the amiable Alcibiades of Brook Street, scarcely deigning to notice the entrance of his sister-in-law (whom the reminiscence of the unorthodox cutlets he had eaten at breakfast, at Green-Oak Cottage, considerably deteriorated in his estimation. " Who *wouldn't* be out of sorts at having to go kicking his heels in an ante-room, or fishing for ready-broiled gudgeons in Virginia Water, when he knows the Derby is being run for within twenty miles' distance !—I always told my father when he chose to shove me into that devil of a place, that I had fifty times rather — ")

" Drive the Brighton mail, or turn groom porter ! " cried his wife. " But don't make yourself out such a victim. You will be at Windsor, you know, for Ascot."

" You women seem to think that a winning post and half-a-dozen running horses, render one race-course the same as another ! Supposing I were to tell you when you have missed Pasta in a new opera, ' Never mind — there's the Surrey Theatre and Miss Timminson.' — Ascot indeed ! — I wish you would not talk of what you do not understand."

" Well — well — let me sympathise in silence. I am really concerned, both for you and myself ; for *you*, because three or four times a year you are forced to do something disagreeable to you (because you *are* forced to do it) ; for *myself*, because I had set my heart on going to Lord Romsey's."

" Set your *heart* ! " retorted sweet Willy ; whose selfishness, once set on end, was fretful as the porcupine.

" But why so anxious to join the party ? " inquired

Mrs. Hamilton, resenting for Julia the indignities she was too light-headed to resent for herself. "Who is to be at the Lodge?"

"Oh! every body that any body cares for. All the best whist-players in town. And how shall I make up my rubber when they are all down at the Romseys'? And then, all the pleasant people; Lady Leighton, Eardley Varden, and his clever cousin, who does the caricatures, and takes off Hunt and Cobbett—and Paul Romanzoff,—and —"

"But these are the people you meet every night of your life."

"In their masks and dominos, not in the *disinvoltura* of a country house! I assure you I am very sorry for William's disappointment."

"And I, who had made a party with Eardley and John and Robert Singleton, to run over from Romsey's to Brighton!" cried Tottenham. "I wish Windsor was at the devil!"

"High treason—high treason!"

"To make a piece of furniture of oneself, for a few hundreds a year, and a line in the court circular!—To place oneself on a level with an arm-chair or buffet, planted in the corner of an ante-room till one is wanted."—

"Particularly," said Julia, provokingly, "when wanted elsewhere."

"Most people have some disagreeable duty to perform in life," observed Susan, hoping to pacify her brother-in-law.

"But not the duty of a footman out of livery!" retorted the malcontent. "My father ought to have taken care that I was provided for in a proper way. What has he done for me?—Scarcely eleven hundred a year, besides my allowance! And just look at Lord

Shetland's nephews,—look at young Whitney;—look at Eardley,—look at ——”

“But, as Augustus often tells you, *they* have working places.”

“Very easy for Augustus to talk! See what your father has done for *him*! The reversion of a patent place, and a thousand a year snug in his pocket! I would give our sixteen hundred for it, over and over again. Nay, unless Lord Laxington or my father take it into their heads to do something for me, I will positively resign!”

“Four hundred a year would be so much better than sixteen!” cried Julia. “To be sure, our house must be given up,—our furniture sold off. No more hunters,—no more Hermitage,—no winter at Brighton,—no book at Doneaster!—But then, you would be your own master!”

“Are *you* going to Romsey Lodge?” inquired Tottenham of Mrs. Hamilton, who listened in tremulous impatience of a matrimonial dialogue in which such hard truths were exchanged, to compensate perhaps the want of candour of the parties on most other occasions.

“No! I have excused myself. I am expecting my brother from abroad; and Mamma and Marcia are coming to town to meet him.”

“And for *that* you have given up Epsom?” ejaculated William, amazed to find that so much magnanimity existed in human nature. “Does Claneustace return with Sir Edward Berkely?”

“I believe so.”

“He threatened to remain on the continent two years!” cried Julia, laughing, “and I have been married only six months! So much for eternal passions! When he set off for Italy, I expected he would drown

himself and be fished up in a draught of Gorgona anchovies."

Susan, aware of Lord Claneustace's subsequent proposal to her sister, said nothing.

"Half a year-ago," continued Julia, laughing, (and, for a wonder, *not* at her husband,) "he could not live in the same island with me. And now, he will contrive to live in the same street: for I conclude he betakes himself to Mivart's?"

"Lord Laxington has ordered his old rooms to be prepared for him in Spring Gardens."

"In Spring Gardens?" exclaimed Tottenham, "Why, what more can your father want with him? Has Lord Laxington any nieces?"

"Better leave them to settle their own affairs!" said Julia, unwilling that her father should become the object of her husband's sarcasms. "Susan is waiting for an opportunity to ring for the carriage, and wish us good morning."

CHAP. XVII.

Why should a man whose heart is warm within
Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster?

Merchant of Venice.

ONE of Lady Berkely's motives of triumph in the marriage of the younger of her daughters, was the hope it afforded of getting rid of the elder; and great indeed had been her ladyship's disappointment on discovering that the young couple were to reside under the roof of Lord Laxington. *She* knew too much of the world to fall into Susan's pleasing delusion that

she should be able to invite her sister whenever she pleased ; and had no hesitation in assuring Marcia, after parting with Mrs. Hamilton on her wedding-day, that they should see no more of her till the return of the family to Weald Park.

Green-Oak had therefore gained comparatively little by the loss of Susan. Lady Berkely had lost the patient butt of her ill-humour ; — Marcia, the companion of her youth. Pen. Smith, now that she had the affairs of the Laxington family to investigate for the amusement of Laxington, intruded more resolutely than ever ; and Mrs. Mangles (who fancied that Lady Berkely's son-in-law's sire could make her worthy Doctor a Very or even Right Reverend Doctor as easily as *she* had translated Jem Riley into the gardenership of the Vicarage) bestowed her tediousness upon the family as if she were bestowing a bribe !

But, if less gratified than she expected by her riddance of a daughter, Lady B. had reason to be content with the prospect of welcoming back her son. Sir Edward, on the day of achieving his majority, had written a kind and generous letter, proposing such pecuniary arrangements as would deliver her from her difficulties, and secure a liberal addition to the fortune of his sister. He had quitted England at nineteen, a fine, animated, handsome, headstrong, ignorant lad ; and Marcia, who dearly loved her brother, had the satisfaction to perceive that if the learned professors of Berlin had done something for the enlightenment of his mind, and the various courts of Italy for the refinement of his manners, his heart was as English, as honourable, and as warm, as when he quitted Green-Oak.

As it was indispensable that Lady Berkely should meet her son in town, for a formal discharge of her

guardianship account, Susan engaged rooms for the family at Thomas's Hotel ; and on returning home in haste, to announce by the post the completion of her arrangements, as she entered her room two rough arms were thrown round her neck, and she found herself in the embrace of Sir Edward ! The surprise was as disagreeable as surprises generally are, — accompanied by the usual hysterical shriek, flow of tears, and flow of hartshorn.

“ Just like my cursed folly ! ” cried Sir Edward, having placed his sister in an arm-chair near the open window, and dismissed the lady’s maid. “ Where women are concerned, I am always in the wrong ! One has so often one’s lesson to begin again. A week passed among fine ladies, inspires a respect for nerves for a year to come. But a month spent with such an amazon as Lady Ashley (with whom Claneustace and I have been living a month at Paris, leaping over hurdles and shooting at a mark every day in the Bois de Boulogne), sets one wrong for ages.”

“ There is no great harm done ! ” said Mrs. Hamilton, still trembling, and still very pale. “ And now, come and sit down by me, like a reasonable being, and tell me all you have seen, and where you have been.”

“ Like a reasonable being ? You mean, like a quarto volume, with plates ! No ! I won’t tell you a word of my travels till I meet you at some dinner party. I have got my lesson by rote, which it would bore me to repeat too often. But I don’t like that pale face of yours, Susy ! Now you are established as a London beauty, I suppose you think you have a right to look as ill as you please ? ”

“ Who told you I was established as a beauty ? ”

inquired Mrs. Hamilton, blushing, into the degree of bloom exacted by her brother.

"The newspapers, and Claneustace's correspondents. 'The lovely Mrs. Hamilton,' is now a settled phrase, like 'the gifted Canning,' or 'the great Sir Walter!' And, by the way, where is Hamilton?"

"He will not be at home till dinner."

"I have heard wonders from Claneustace of the whole family."

"A disappointed lover is not likely to have produced very flattering portraits."

"The disappointed lover was not an inconsolable one, as Marcia may have told you. But my friend is very fond of his guardian; and was rather angry with me at Rome for not bespeaking a general illumination in honour of your marriage. We nearly fought upon it."

"I thought it was with Colonel Fitzgerald you nearly fought, at Rome?" said Susan, with perfect *naïveté*.

"Has the news of *that* foolish business reached England?" cried Sir Edward. "Irish blood, my dear Sue!—all the fault of my Irish blood;—perpetually getting into scrapes, on my own account or other people's!—I am obliged to remind myself, ten times a day, that my father used to call a duellist a braggart without sense or feeling; and that my mother defines a fire-eater as an ill-bred brute."

"Edward, Edward!"

"I am thinking of going into the army, by way of getting bullied out of my turbulence of spirit. Nothing like military discipline for taming down a bad temper."

"But *yours* was never a bad temper!" cried Susan, indignantly taking his defence against himself. "Only a little passionate."

"Aha! my little Susy! how plainly the married woman breaks out in your having learned to recognise that distinction without a difference."

"But are you serious about the army?"

"Serious as the London Gazette."

"And what regiment do you think of?"

"I have no vocation for any thing rougher or readier than the Coldstream. A vast number of my old Eton chums are in the Guards; and I do not care to play the fag to strangers. My name is down already."

"Lord Laxington would get it settled for you immediately!" cried Susan, with incosiderate eagerness. "He has great interest at the Horse Guards."

"Thank you!" replied her brother. "I flatter myself Sir Clement Berkely's only son requires no backing in an application for a pair of colours."

"Do you want to prove your aptitude to take offence without reason?" said Susan, a little mortified.

"No! my darling little sister. But I must not have you forget your own people and your father's house, amidst all this official glitter. You may bless yourself, Sue, that the match was settled during my absence. I should have consented with reluctance to your marrying a Tory; I should have consented with reluctance to your marrying a dandy; I should have consented with reluctance to your marrying a placeman, or pensioner. Thank your stars, therefore! For had I not been detained at Butrinto by a pair of the bluest eyes that ever melted there since the days of Helen, I should have taken post to forbid the banns!"

"Have you done? — and will you listen while I assure you that Augustus is no dandy?"

"Then the world and his quondam friend, Lady Ashley, belie him. At one time, he is said to have had pretensions to the vacant throne of Brummeldom."

"Lady Ashley is a spiteful disappointed woman! -- But tell me, Edward, what are you going to do in London? -- When do you visit your Irish estates -- and how has foreign travel influenced your political principles?"

"Political principles, my dear child, I have none; estates, scarce any worth mentioning. What I intend to do in London, is better known to you than myself; for you will probably drive me where you think proper. Don't let it be *far*, for I am tired of wandering; nor into matrimony, unless you have a charming heiress for me, as pretty as Caroline Warren. And now, explain to me, in your turn, what made Marcia refuse Claneustace, and keep it so great a secret from my mother?"

"Mamma would never have forgiven her. -- As to her motives, Marcia fancied he proposed only in revenge upon Julia Hamilton. But I cannot help fearing she has formed an attachment to that odious Bernard Forbes!"

"To Bernard Forbes? I'm heartily glad of it! There is not a finer fellow in England; -- upright, honourable, manly, humane. He was pitched in too high a key for *you*, Susy; but he'll exactly suit Marcia."

"But mamma would never consent. She was always applauding my refusal of him."

"Forbes's prospects have begun to open since those days. Forbes is a very rising man. It depends on himself to become the leader of a third party in the House."

"Is he in Parliament? Surely you are laughing at me. I never heard his name mentioned in society."

"Not here, perhaps, in the head-quarters of Toryism. But Lord Laxington must be as great a dissembler as

Napoleon, if he keep his people in ignorance that the allies have reached his frontier. Do you mean to say, it is *really* news to you that Forbes has been in Parliament since Easter, and distinguished himself in almost every question brought before the House?"

"I never read the newspapers, and politics are seldom talked of at table here. Augustus is no politician; and knows that I hate the very names of Whig or Tory."

"My poor mother certainly gave you a surfeit of the former; but I suspect you will hear more than is pleasant for you of the latter, before the fight is fought out. But to return to Marcia. Tell me in what way I can best promote this match. Forbes is a brother-in-law I should be proud of."

"*I do* believe you are angry with me for not having preferred him to Augustus!"

"Not a bit. I should be sorry that a sister of mine married a particular friend of mine, if she happened to dislike him; because my particular friend would be sure to gain a particularly disagreeable wife."

"But Forbes is *not* your particular friend," cried Susan.

"Because, during the few months I spent at Green-Oak before I went to Germany, I was ten years too young, and ten times too great a cub, for any such distinction."

"But the disproportion of age still exists?"

"No! My beard has sprouted wonderfully during the last three years. My views of men and things are wholly altered. I love all men who love their country, and first among the ranks stands Bernard Forbes. He is not a lady's man. I can say nothing in favour of his coat. He dresses like a dustman, and ties his

cravat as other men cord a portmanteau. But no matter. He has a first-rate head and first-rate heart."

"And so you have made up your mind to dislike my husband?" faltered Susan, with a trembling lip.

"God forbid! It is a libel of your own making, my dear sister, if you find a word to apply to Hamilton in all I have been saying."

"Ah! here he comes!" cried Susan, her face brightening as the well-known step was heard to traverse the adjoining room.

"My dear little sister!" said Sir Edward, folding her again in his arms, "your countenance at this moment contains more argument in Hamilton's favour than might convince the most stubborn jury. If you continue to love him thus, I am afraid I shall end by preferring him to Bernard Forbes!"

CHAP. XVIII.

Ce qu'on y entend n'a pas le sens commun ; mais il est impossible de donner à des sottises une tournure plus agréable. — COLNET.

SIR EDWARD BERKELY, frank, cordial, and lively, was soon established as a favourite in the brilliant sphere wherein his pretty sister was a fixed star. His manners had the charm of novelty. Though he often ventured to touch a jarring string in presence of those who fancied they monopolized the tuning key of society and could accord the instrument at their liking, he was a frequent guest at Lord Laxington's; where Lady Berkely and Marcia, who were now settled in town, found their main point of attraction. Lady

Berkely, gratified in her utmost hopes and expectations, was now all grace and amiability ; while Marcia, in the happiness of a re-union with her brother and sister, laid aside her usual gravity. There was no drawback on the joy of the Berkely family. Even Lord Laxington was proud of them ; for the suffrage of society was in their favour.

On one head, however, his lordship was not without misgivings. Elevated to the peerage in order to strengthen the ministerial party in the Upper House, he was relieved from his more active public duties, and at leisure to note the proceedings of his ward ; who, under the tutorage of Sir Edward Berkely, was becoming a source of uneasiness.

He had failed in attaching Claneustace to his family ; he might perhaps fail in attaching him to his party. Aware that his still-existing authority over the Claneustace boroughs gave him considerable importance in the eyes of the Marquis of Shetland, his lordship could not, with patience, contemplate a disappointment on this point. To separate him from his Eton friend and chosen companion was of course impossible. The Marquis had declined resuming his old quarters in Spring Gardens ; and all that remained was to render him a frequent guest in the house, by increasing its attractions. As Lord Claneustace was so fond of the Berkelys, therefore, Lord Laxington became earnest in his entreaties to his daughter-in-law, that her family would consider his home their own.

Sir Edward, meanwhile, had tact enough to discover the uneasiness of the courtier-politician ; and, more in the boyish spirit of mischief or for the pleasure of circumventing an intrigue than motived by any fixed purpose of a political nature, gloried in ex-

aggerating, in Lord Laxington's presence, his influence over the mind of his young friend. Whenever a political discussion took place (and Sir Edward was not slow in starting the game), the wily guardian stood off, beating the bushes at a distance, while Berkely dashed headlong into the covert.

"Do you know," said he, one day across the dinner-table to Lady Leighton, when Lord Laxington's party consisted only of the two families and one or two political associates,— "do you know, I mean to make money by selling Claneustace to the opposition! Political bias he has none,—have you, Clan.?—and Lord Laxington has just assured us that the government squad wants no recruiting. They can therefore afford to spare a stray sheep from their goodly flock, to fatten a poor devil like myself,—just come into possession of a bog or two, to balance against an arrear of some tens of thousands of franks to his Paris banker, for travelling expenses."

"And what do you mean to accept for me?" said the Marquis; to whose character his boyish disappointments imparted a listlessness that placed him at the mercy of his impetuous friend.

"I'm afraid you're not worth more than the price of your three votes and proxy!— You are too lazy, my dear fellow, ever to become a public man; particularly now you are becoming a sap. I've reduced a thousand or two in my estimate, since I saw a book in your hand!—No, Clan.!—you will never have a grain of influence."

"That is to be seen!" replied the Marquis; amused to observe that, although apparently engrossed in conversation with Lady Berkely, Lord Laxington was lending his attention to every word of the dialogue. "Your precocious heroes often fail in the proof; and

a young Roscius sometimes dwindles into a scene-shifter. I was a monstrous stupid dog at Eton, and studied nothing at Cambridge but smoking and snipe-shooting. But it is something to have found myself out; and what prodigy the discovery may make of me in the sequel, is ‘a thing to dream of, not to tell.’ The miracles of my genius are still undeveloped.”

“ You have at least lost all chance of becoming a Pitt or a Canning! Your late-blowing flowers are invariably Whigs. Remain a stupid fellow only a few years longer, and I shall get a premium on my bargain.”

“ Even with mortgages and bonds existing on the property?” inquired Lady Leighton, delighted with the dare-all abruptness of young Berkely, in whom she recognised a kindred spirit. “ My dear Mrs. Hamilton, persuade your brother to give me a line of recommendation to his broker. Who knows!—Perhaps I might get half-price for Sir Joseph!”

“ Inquire of Bernard Forbes, Esq., M. P., Fig Tree Court, Temple,—or some other such distinguished locality.”

“ You are acquainted then with this Mr. Forbes!” inquired Lord Laxington, addressing Sir Edward.

“ I am acquainted with *that* Mr. Forbes.”

“ I mean the person who made the extraordinary speech on the Catholic question, just before Easter!—No one ever heard of him before. But he has made a prodigious sensation.”

“ Never heard of him before? — Ay!—there it is!” cried Sir Edward. “ Let a man display the eloquence of Demosthenes, the wisdom of Bacon, and the polish of Burke, in some court of law where human life is reasoned away per force of rhetoric, or where millions of property are fillipped into the air like the powder

of his wig, by the wagging of some lawyer's head, and who cares for his wisdom or his eloquence? — It may make him opulent, buy him a house in Bedford Square, and change his barrister's shandrydan into a chaise and four. But till his learned wig figures in Parliament, his learned head goes for nothing!"

"I assure you, Edward, you are mistaken," replied Marcia Berkely calmly; "Mr. Forbes has long been eminent in every circle, except, perhaps, that of the coteries."

"Which means that, as Lord Laxington just observed, he was never heard of in society," exclaimed Lady Berkely, indignant against both her children.

"Four years ago," resumed Marcia, "a work of his was universally applauded."

"Some stupid political pamphlet!" retorted Lady Berkely.

"No! — an Essay on the genius and writings of Bolingbroke."

"An Essay! — the sort of thing that no one reads!"

"Every one read it: for it was called a criticism, and appeared in the Edinburgh Review!"

"Did Forbes write that thing in the Edinburgh?" exclaimed Lady Leighton. "I suppose it was *that* got him into Parliament?"

"His defence in the great Burlington cause got him into Parliament," replied Marcia, nothing daunted by Lord Laxington's overclouded face. "It produced a great impression in Yorkshire; and the member for York happening to die at the moment, he was returned, almost without being consulted."

"Very flattering!" said Lord L., doing the magnanimous.

"*That* is what I call distinction!" observed Lord Claneustace.

"And alas! this very man I recollect being most barbarously rude to, one morning, when we called at Green-Oak Cottage!" cried Lady Leighton, shrugging her shoulders.

"Your ladyship, then, is acquainted with Mr. Forbes?" inquired Lord Laxington of Lady Berkely, dropping his original "this," in apprehension of a second retort from Sir Edward.

"His father is the proprietor of Green-Oak Cottage," she replied, evidently ashamed of the acquaintance.

"An old gentleman I have occasionally met on the Laxington road, in a curious old chariot, with a curious pair of old long-tailed, black horses?" persisted Lord Laxington.

"Precisely. I rejoice to hear that the chariot and horses are still extant," interposed Sir Edward. "I trust he will bequeath them to the British Museum."

"I understand the whole thing perfectly now," said Lord Laxington. "When I took Weald, the son was pointed out to me by my friend Lord Tottenham, as a man of dangerous principles; very troublesome to *him* in a political point of view, and likely to become equally disagreeable to *me*, unless I kept him at a distance."

"Your lordship has found him pretty close at your heels lately!" said Sir Edward, laughing.

"Mr. Bernard Forbes is one whose very name is offensive to me," cried Lady B. "Vulgar, even in his politics, a radical, an agitator, a person whom I never would have consented to receive within my gates, did I not happen to be his father's tenant."

"Your ladyship is unfortunate in an antipathy to the name," observed Claneustace, mildly, hoping to ingratiate himself into Marcia's good opinion by defending a person she appeared to regard; "for it is

one you are likely to hear more of. . Forbes's reputation is one of the wonders of the day."

" A mystery which Miss Berkely has just unravelled, by informing us of his connection with the press," said Augustus Hamilton, who had hitherto taken no part in the conversation; for he was one of those who consider talking an impertinence during the grave business of the first course. " The gentlemen of the fourth estate make common-cause with every public man whose pen has been dipped in ink. To have scribbled a book,—no matter whether on asthetics or cookery,—is a sufficient recommendation. I mean to become a contributor to an annual before I make *my* maiden speech!"

" Surely the literary *debûts* in the House, within the last few years, have been accounted failures ?" said Lord Claneustace.

" If you mean that, of several eminent authors now in Parliament, not one has made good in politics the reputation previously achieved in literature, I heartily agree with you," replied his guardian. " But Augustus is justified in his assertion that the press people delight in deifying every dirty scribbler of their tribe."

" Ay, ay! men of letters are sure of a place in the *great* letters," chimed in Varden, himself a scribbler of the three thousandth magnitude. " But Forbes is too recondite for the House. Forbes has spoiled a good lawyer to make a bad politician."

" Surely it must require less genius to manufacture new laws, than to comprehend the very extraordinary ones manufactured by our forefathers?" observed Marcia, coolly.

" Your *protégé*, Mr. Forbes, so far agrees with you, Miss Berkely," said Lord Laxington, with a sneer, " that he is for overthrowing all existing legislation!"

"Cutting up old acts into tailor's measures," rejoined Augustus, "and new pointing the constitution, like a dilapidated wall!"

"I am afraid he will prove a most mischievous character," said Lady Berkely, in a solemn voice.

"You must not do him too much honour, my dear madam," rejoined Lord Laxington. "I have witnessed the rise and fall of two or three of these reformers; who blaze and bounce themselves into notice; and, after having been mistaken for meteors, prove mere fireworks, and expire in noise and smoke."

"Something mephitic in the atmosphere may have caused their extinction," observed Marcia, in an undertone,—but a tone that was not lost on the young Marquis; "the nutriment of pure air was wanting. By *this* time the noxious vapours have cleared away;—for the present meteor burns brighter than the rest."

"What did you think of Pasta, last night, my dear Lady Berkely?" abruptly inquired Lord Laxington, eager to put an end to the discussion.

"Divine! Enchanting! Beyond any thing I ever heard!" cried her ladyship, aware that, at that moment, rapture in behalf of Pasta was a certificate of good breeding.

"Ah! my dear mother," said Sir Edward, "you have never heard Pasta!"

"Pardon me, my dear Edward, I heard her in Semiramis last night."

"Only her ghost,—which wanders occasionally on the shores of that Styx of coalheavers, the river Thames!—Like Marcia's meteor, a *cantatrice* requires pure air. Pasta at Naples, and Pasta in the Haymarket, are no more alike than the Egyptian Hall at the Mansion House to those of Thebes. No woman

can sing in tune in an atmosphere impregnated with gas."

"What nonsense!"

"Applaud it then,—for you quarrelled with me just now for talking sense!"

"We won't insist upon the atmosphere, as no Sir Humphry Davy is at hand to set us right," interposed Lord Claneustace. "But the audience must be supposed to exercise a certain influence. There is some stimulus in singing to the initiated. In Italy, Pasta performs to judges; in London, to enthusiasts,—and blind or deaf enthusiasts. To excite their plaudits, she has only to outrage taste by some extravagance, and the house is almost shaken down; while her purest and most delicate graces pass unobserved; and her recitative (the finest ever heard) is scarcely listened to."

"You have become quite a *dilettante*! my dear Claneustace!" said his guardian.

"It was time for me to become *something*!" replied the Marquis, with a smile; "and *dilettanteism* is just now part of one's vocation."

"Guess who was his instructor!" cried Sir Edward.

"Italy is a wide field."

"In Italy he did nothing but play cricket! It was in the Salle Favart that Clan. served his apprenticeship: and under no less eminent a master than—I must again beg your lordship to guess?"

"I have no musical acquaintances, in Paris, but old Viotti," observed Lord Laxington, taking it seriously.

"But can you call to mind no favourite friend,—no *female* friend,—skilled in giving the finishing touch to a young gentleman's education, who (on your lordship's account alone) may have condescended to receive Claneustace into her tutorage?"

" You are making both of us of too much importance," said the Marquis, unwilling that these allusions should occur in Marcia's presence.

" Not half so much as you were made by herself. What think you of Lady Ashley?" he persisted, addressing himself to Lord Laxington.

" I was not aware that you knew her, my dear Claneustace?" replied his lordship, evidently disconcerted.

" She was very kind to us at Paris," he replied. " We found her house extremely agreeable."

" Had I known Lady Ashley was in Paris, I would have sent you a letter to her," replied his guardian.

" Quite superfluous!" cried Sir Edward. " She took us upon trust, in the frankest and most liberal manner; and seemed to rejoice in the opportunity of betraying to us the secrets of her Northamptonshire friends."

Sir Edward's volubility was suddenly interrupted. On a signal from Augustus Hamilton to Susan, the ladies rose to quit the room; not without affording time for Lady Leighton to whisper to Sir Edward, as she passed, " Do not bait the bear too long. He may lose his patience, and break his chain!"

CHAP. XIX.

But oh! beware of jealousy.

SHAKSPEARE.

" My dear Susan," said Lady Berkely to her daughter, having contrived to get her alone a few days after this conversation; — " do you know that I am not quite easy about you!"

"Not easy about *me*, Mamma?—Surely if any person's destiny ever satisfied the wishes of their friends, *mine* must be the one. Married to the man of my choice,—living in the enjoyment of every luxury on earth!—I sometimes think I am *too* happy, and that some unlooked-for misfortune will befall me!"

"And so there *will*, my dear, if you don't take care! I grant that your situation is a brilliant one, and that Lord Laxington is very kind.—But you don't make enough of your opportunities. You don't take pains to occupy the place you ought in society. I don't speak on Marcia's account; though, to be sure, it would be a great thing for the family if a match could be made up for her with Lord Claneustace. But you really ought to live more in the world."

"Have I not been out every night since you came to town?"

"Exactly!—You dress at a certain hour, and appear in some ball-room for a certain length of time;—in-different what impression you make, or with whom you converse; and return home, yawning with ennui, at one o'clock, in order that your husband may go and sup at his club."

"Why stay, where I am not amused?" said Mrs. Hamilton, not choosing to notice the last remark, though wondering where her mother had obtained such accurate intelligence.

"You *would* amuse yourself, if you did like other people, and formed a circle of your own.—No one obtains a standing in the world without taking a little trouble. And, though your position is well enough now, while Lord Shetland is in power and Lord Laxington his right hand, think what you would become should any thing happen to either of them!—The re-version of a title, and a patent place, would form a

poor exchange for the position you enjoy ; and, unless you make friends while the sun shines — ”

“ My dear mother ! I have innumerable friends ! — ” interrupted Mrs. Hamilton, glancing at her ample visiting book, which lay on the table.

“ Not one, my dear ! — *Acquaintances*, if you please, but not a single friend ! — Whom do you take pains to oblige ? To whom do you give up your time ? ”

“ To all of them ! ”

“ Exactly ! — You accept the civilities of the Duchess of Ptarmigan, as you would those of Pen. Smith ; and leave your card on Lady Baldock, as on Mrs. Mangles ! — The other night, I saw you sitting for a quarter of an hour beside Lord Shetland, without opening your mouth ! ”

“ He is so deaf ! ”

“ For which reason, any woman at the trouble of amusing him, obtains an influence over his mind. Lady Leighton came afterwards, and took your place ; made him talk and laugh, or talked and laughed for his diversion ; and the consequence is, that Lady Leighton’s grandmother is on the pension list ! ”

“ But I have no grandmother, dear mamma, and am by nature less lively than Lady Leighton.”

“ Who is to determine the nature of Lady Leighton’s nature ? — a woman who has been living in the world these twenty years ! — As well attempt to guess the original colour of the Cutler stocking. Again, with respect to Lord Laxington, — you take no pains to please him. Though brought up a staunch Whig, *I* would not do any thing to vex him for the world.”

“ Believe me,” interrupted Susan, “ I obey every wish he expresses — ”

“ Why not forestal them ? — He evidently wants you to make a figure in the world ; yet, instead of

gratifying his pride, you seclude yourself as much as decency will allow."

"I go out whenever Augustus is disengaged, and can accompany me."

"Do you *never* mean to trust yourself without Mr. Hamilton dangling after you, like a shadow? Not that I would disparage the custom of young married people being seen together; for the first year or two, it is strictly correct. But a woman perpetually engrossed by her husband, forms no circle of her own. The world feels itself *de trop* with such vastly domestic people."

"I am very happy without it," sighed the indolent Susan. "I have no desire to be happier."

"The power of benefiting your friends, advancing the fortunes of your brother and sister, and securing your own independence, is surely worth some struggle!"

"Not if accomplished by a life of worldliness and hypocrisy."

"I am not aware of having suggested either," cried Lady Berkely, with indignation. "But take your own course! Some day or other, when your husband shall have ceased to care about you (which may happen sooner than you expect), you will regret that you have secured no support in society; cultivated no friendships; acquired no partizans; obliged no one; studied nothing but your own selfish enjoyment."

The severities of this adjuration were lost upon Mrs. Hamilton. She heard only the first denunciation,—"When your husband shall have ceased to care about you, which may happen sooner than you expect." Was such a thing among the possibilities of human misfortune? Could Augustus, who had so worshipped her beauty, so rejoiced in her smiles, so cultivated her caprices, *could* he ever become indifferent? How cruel of her mother to hazard such a sup-

position! Augustus, for whom she lived and breathed ; whom she had loved almost at first sight, and whom she should love so long as her eyes could rest upon him ! Augustus, for whose sake she would sacrifice the world, and to whom she thought all the world ought to be subservient ; Augustus, so handsome, so brilliant, so gay, and now so much her own !

" I am not afraid of losing my husband's affection," said she, with some spirit, as soon as she could command her voice. " Augustus is sincerely attached to me ; and I shall do nothing to estrange his love."

" Perhaps not — but others may."

" Who can possibly wish to make mischief between us ! "

" Twenty people ! — Lady Ashley for one ; — whom he left planted, in order to make proposals to you."

" Lady Ashley is at Paris."

" She has been in London these three days. Your brother found Hamilton sitting with her yesterday morning. And now that we are on the subject, my dear," added Lady Berkely in a solemn whisper, " I own it has long been my intention to warn you on a very delicate — an *extremely* delicate subject, of vital importance to the happiness of your married life."

" Good morning, Lady Berkely," interrupted the voice of Augustus Hamilton ; who, having entered the adjoining room during the heat of the debate, had overheard all that related to himself. " Susan, dearest, — what makes you so flushed to-day ? You look quite feverish ? "

" Do I ? — Pray, is Lady Ashley come to town ? " she inquired, with an explicitness that would have charmed him, had it related to any other subject.

" She is. — I saw her yesterday. Do you dine at Lord Tottenham's to-day ? "

"Your father accepted the engagement. Julia and William will be there; and, in the evening, Lady Tottenham has a concert; so we shall not be able to get away early."

"*I* shall not be there at all," said Hamilton. "I am engaged to dine with Eardley at the Travellers'. Perhaps I may look in at night, and bring you home."

Lady Berkely, who had been thoroughly disconcerted by the sudden entrance of Augustus, here cast a triumphant glance at her daughter.

"I had much rather not go to the Tottenhams," said Susan, growing very pale.

"That is out of the question. My father would be very much displeased; and, as *I* dine out, you would be alone."

"I could go to mamma —"

"No, my love,—we have an engagement;" said Lady Berkely. "Besides, you have no plea for breaking off yours with the Tottenhams."

"Wish me joy, Susy!—Mother, wish me joy!" cried Sir Edward, suddenly entering the room, followed by Marcia, who had been driving with him in the Park. "Behold me installed a military and a London man,—on the high road to heroism,—on the high road to dandyism;—‘*Nulli Secundus!*’ an ensign in His Majesty’s Coldstream!—No sooner was I gazetted, than Thomas’s Hotel appeared too small to hold me!"

"What is the matter, dearest,—are you ill?" whispered Marcia to her sister, during this *tirade*.

"I hope, Hamilton, you have a good supply of patience in store for me, for I mean to sponge upon you considerably," continued Sir Edward, unobservant, in his high spirits, of all that was going on. "By the way, I saw Lady Ashley just now (making faces at an ice at Gunter’s door), who begged I would remind

you of your engagement to her this evening. Have you got Lord Shetland's box at Covent Garden for her, as you promised ? ”

Again did Lady Berkely launch a triumphant glance at poor Mrs. Hamilton.

“ How ill Susan is looking ! ” exclaimed Sir Edward. “ London hours and London air will be the death of her. How long do you think of remaining in town, Hamilton ? Why not take her down to Weald to recruit ? ”

“ We shall go there at the close of the season,” replied Augustus, coolly.

“ What signifies the season ? You are not in Parliament, and *she* is not a fine lady. You would both be better in Northamptonshire.”

“ I would gladly leave town to-morrow,” faltered Susan, with tears in her eyes.

“ That, unfortunately, is out of the question. My father is obliged to remain in town till August ; and I make it a rule to bear him company. But if you wish for change of air, you can return to Green-Oak with Lady Berkely and your sister ? ”

“ Or accompany me, at once, to Ireland ? ” cried Sir Edward. “ I must run over, for an interview with my agent, before I join my regiment ; and it would be a new scene for you.”

“ I could try, my dear Susan, to get you the Admiralty yacht,” added Augustus.

“ Thanks, thanks ! I have not the *least* wish to leave town : I never was better in my life ! ” said Susan, looking paler than before. “ I stayed rather later than usual last night at Almack's—Colonel Eardley could not get up the carriage. But I am perfectly well.”

Sir Edward looked vexed and inquisitive ; fearing that some disagreement must have taken place be-

tween Susan and her husband. Half the truth rushed into his mind, as he retreated to the window—Hamilton's attentions to Lady Ashley had given her pain!—But, on this head, the kind brother saw no ground for anxiety. He had good reason to know that no feeling of a tender nature subsisted, or had ever subsisted, between Lord Laxington's son and the fair widow of Stoke. The momentary cloud on his frank open countenance was not however lost on Augustus. Sir Edward Berkely was evidently too quick in temper, too hasty in his impulses, to admit of any slight or unkindness offered to his sister.

Had Augustus Hamilton felt innocent of all reproach, his first feeling would have been the pique of pride often expressed in similar contingencies : “ I shall not allow myself to be bullied by my wife’s family.” As it was, he contented himself with whispering to his conscience, “ I must be on my guard with Berkely,—Berkely is a slippery fellow.”

He had already admonished himself that, so long as Lady Berkely was in town, he must be careful not to expose Susan to a second *tête-à-tête* with her mother. It was no great sacrifice. The Berkelys were to leave London in a week, and during that week he was constantly by Susan’s side.

“ How needless, dear mother, were your alarms!” she whispered, on taking leave of Lady Berkely, while Augustus was receiving a few parting commissions from Sir Edward ; “ Augustus has not been half an hour absent from me for the last six days !”

“ My dear child, you know but little of the world !” ejaculated Lady Berkely, mournfully shaking her head, as she embraced her ; which portentous gesture, long after her mother’s departure, sufficed to disturb the peace of mind of Mrs. Hamilton.

CHAP. XX.

Comme deux rayons de l'Aurore,
Comme deux soupirs confondus,
Nos deux âmes ne forment plus
Qu'une âme—— et je soupire encore !

LAMARTINE.

DURING the whole spring, Mrs. Hamilton consoled herself for the noisy publicity of the life she was leading, by the prospect of passing the summer in the country. But when the summer came, she found herself under the necessity of seeking the same amusements, and frequenting the same places, she had been reluctantly haunting for the last four months. As soon as the heat and dust became intolerable, she was assured that London had never been so pleasant; and when, at length, the free and happy multitude departed to their country seats, and nothing remained but slavish officials, chained to the purlieus of Parliament, a few *blasés* of fashion, incapable of existing in a purer atmosphere, and a few women of fashion incapable of existing without *them*, she heard, with amazement, that "now came in the sweet o' the season!"

Still, she had the consolation of hoping to spend the autumn in Northamptonshire; and, so often had she expressed her eager anticipation of the pleasant hours she should pass with her husband, Marcia, and her mother, in the haunts of her earlier years, that it

required some courage on the part of the former to announce the very different destiny awaiting her. He might also feel, in some degree, ashamed to avow that, in spite of his pride and insolence, his time and services, as well as those of his father, were as much at the disposal of the Marquis of Shetland as those of the marquis were the property of the country ; and that it had not depended on him to refuse a secret mission which would detain them the whole winter at Vienna. His lordship's policy happened to require a medium of ex-official communication with Metternich ; and no suspicion of the political spy was likely to attach itself to the refined dandyism of Augustus Hamilton.

It was fortunately unnecessary to communicate at once to Mrs. Hamilton the whole extent of the engagement. A political conference of a secret nature was about to take place between the delegates of the Great Powers at Baden, where Lord Laxington was to represent the interests of England ; and where, in order to avoid notice, he determined that his family should accompany him. Susan, who, though weak and indisposed, was aware that her situation required only country air and quiet, learned therefore, to her consternation, that Sir Henry Halford had specified the Baden waters as indispensable to her health ; and that Lord Laxington, all anxiety for her recovery, had kindly consented to accompany his amiable daughter-in-law ! A scape-goat for the intrigues of a cabal of politicians, she was hurried off to Germany, without even a farewell interview with her family and friends, or any hope of penetrating the mysterious secret of Lady Berkely.

Nothing appears more unaccountable, now that the gorgeous fabric has crumbled into dust, than the as-

cendancy maintained at the period in question by the Tory, or Holy Alliance party, in every Court throughout Europe. To belong, even collaterally to an administration which, however questionable its method of holding the reins, caused the great vehicle of the state to rumble on without drag or staff, was, in the capitals of the Allied Sovereigns, a sufficient title to honour. If there were victims under the wheels, their cries were unheard amid the loud huzzas of venal partizans;—if the object of the progress were of evil portent to the many, its career was rendered to the few no less “pleasant than wrong.” The policy of the party forbade all discussion of its aims and ends. The King must not be harassed, parliamentary dissensions must not be provoked; till expeditives, palliatives, and a tacit but unswerving maintenance of the existing order of things, consolidated at last an iron bulwark of absolutism, independent of, though seeming to support, the throne.

In the artificial state of society then existent, the mere imputation of liberalism insured forfeiture of *caste*. The few individuals who, having outstripped their century, presumed to reflect back upon the abuses of the age the brightness of their enlightenment, were stigmatised as lunatics or incendiaries. When the heir of a distinguished Dukedom rose in the House of Commons, announcing in a fit of pique, his intention to bring forward the question of Parliamentary Reform, only one year previous to that great consummation, he was derided as no less a madman than if he had said “Let us root up Waterloo bridge, and ascertain whether its foundations be rotten !”

The result of this self-security and party condensation, if more injurious to the country by means of the head of the administration, was most *ridiculous* in the

persons of his underlings ;—the nails and screws which fancied themselves of paramount importance in mortising together the polished corners of the Temple ;—the Peregrine Vardens, William Tottenhams, and Augustus Hamiltons, who, “drest in a little brief authority,” fancied that “little,” enormous,—and that “brief” eternal. The prolonged ascendancy, under various modifications, of the same party, had rendered Office a sort of *un*-learned profession. The inutility of the useless was overlooked ; for the rambling, crazy, edifice of the unregenerated State had lumber rooms for the shelter of all sorts and conditions of human rubbish. The embarrassments of the needy became a jest ; for a caprice of the King or his ministers might, at any moment, place a treasure in the mouth of their sack.—People neglected the usual means of securing independence ; for, was it not absurd to lose time in digging a potato-field, while the trees of Aladdin’s magic garden were dropping fruits of jewels and gold on the head of the thrifless husbandman ?

What motive had such people as the Hamiltons and Tottenhams for economy ; with their places in enjoyment, their pensions in perspective, their patronage in inheritance to their children !—They regarded their claim upon the sovereign for their Mint or Buckhounds, much as their old housekeepers and butlers asserted for themselves the right to a retreat at the Post-office, Excise, or Customs ; as if being liberally remunerated throughout twenty years’ service, endowed them with a claim to be remunerated twenty years longer, for doing nothing !

Meanwhile, wheel was so cunningly cogged within wheel, and their authority over the regulation of the dial-plate so absolute, that no derangement of the horologe became visible to eyes profane. The time of

England, Europe, the World, was dependent on a masterhand!—Nor did the ascendant party foresee a morrow to the long sultry day they had created to dry up the marrows of the earth. Their dear Sir Henry would, doubtless, realize the Oriental adjuration of “O King, live for ever!” and who could imagine that a Bourbon, brayed into dust for a quarter of a century in the mortar of adversity, would eventually harden into a stony mass of obstinacy and despotism, whereof to form a final milestone for the course of Absolute Government?

There could not, meanwhile, be a stronger tribute to the stability of the party, than Augustus Hamilton’s acceptance of a subordinate appointment. Augustus,—the handsome, successful, self-reliant Augustus,—who had said of his marriage, as Mazarin of a place he once bestowed, that “it had rendered hundreds discontented, and one, ungrateful;” Augustus, who fancied that his appearance in the beau-window at White’s was the spell of fascination which attracted every female eye towards that cabinet of curiosities; Augustus, who forbore to enter the pit at the Opera during one of Pasta’s airs, lest he should distract the attention of the audience; Augustus, who felt conscious that he owed as much to himself as some men are fools enough to imagine they owe their country;—Augustus, the great Augustus, had at length consented to do some service to the state, which had acted as cashier to his family throughout two generations!

Impossible, however, for any man to entertain a higher sense of his own condescension!—Instead of compassionating Susan’s disappointment on quitting England, he did nothing but point out the sacrifice *he* was making in losing the shooting season at Weald.—Instead of lamenting her fatigue, in so long a journey

at such a time, he enlarged only on the vexation of travelling in Lord Laxington's company, and being obliged to give up his time at Paris to courtiership and St. Cloud, instead of the Salon and the Opera ! He quarrelled with the roads, the inns, the weather ; and, by the time they arrived at Baden, the force of ill-humour "could no further go !"

That his wife, to whom the place was new, should find any thing to admire in its picturesque site and romantic scenery, was an unpardonable offence ! As there was not a soul worth speaking to left at the baths, how was it possible for the valleys to be beautiful, or the rocks and hills sublime ? The *belles Comtesses* had shivered their way back to their hotels in the Faubourg St. Germain ; — the fair Teutons were on their return to their various Residenzes, to enjoy the Court, the theatre, and other winter pleasures ; leaving Baden, and the other watering places of Germany, exclusively to the English, who never travel for the summer till the leaves turn yellow and the grass turns brown ; — or the Russians, to whom the foul weather of other climates is fairer than the fairest of their own.

" How intolerably cold is this detestable place !" cried Hamilton, shrugging his shoulders as he rose from the breakfast table, a day or two after their arrival. " If my father cannot manage to shorten his conferences at Johannesberg, I shall make him a low bow, some day next week, and set off for Vienna."

" You used to tell me Baden was such a charming place !"

" And so it was, when I was here last summer with the Cadogans, the Princesse de Melfont and her daughters, Mornay, Flamarens, and a whole set of pleasant fellows. But now, I plainly see, I shall be bored to death !"

" You talked of some delightful pic-nics in the forest. Could we not have one now ? "

" With whom ? Not a creature in Baden, except a few Russians, who cannot tear themselves away from Bouillote ; and a few second-rate English, ready to stay at any place where Princes and Princesses can be had for asking for."

" There is your friend, Count Illskoy ? "

" Who thinks of nothing but *Rouge et Noir* ! "

" And Dascowicz ? "

" Who thinks of nothing but himself ! "

" Clarence Eardley then ? "

" Who thinks of nothing at all ! "

" Your father desired me to call on Countess Emilie von Tautphus ? "

" An old Wirtemberg Chanoinesse, whom he knew before the Revolution ! "

" And Madame de la Roche-Aymon ? "

" A decrepit monster, who has been here every summer these forty years, fancying the Baden waters will create a spine for her ! By the way, who were those showy-looking English people who bowed to you yesterday as we were returning from our ride ? "

" The Burtonshaws, relations of Mrs. Mangles ; who spent a week every year at Laxington. I know very little of them."

" Pray do not improve the acquaintance ! — I never saw more flagrant people ! — If there be a thing I abhor, it is a family of over-dressed, under-bred, English, on the Continent ; not knowing what they would be at, and staring their eyes out in wonder ; blazing at every theatre, — attracting attention in the public walks, — and acting " Milor Anglais " for the amuse-

ment of foreigners, and the disgust of their own countrymen!"

"The Burtonshaws appear to be harmless people. I believe they made their fortune in India."

"Never mind where they made it; and above all things beware of fastening them upon my father! He hates all that sort of thing even more than I do."

"*Des dames Anglaises qui se présentent pour Madame!*" said Lord Laxington's valet, throwing open the door, in the belief that visitors who made their appearance at breakfast-time must be on very familiar terms with the family.

"*Et qui donc?*" cried Augustus, with a presentiment of the impending calamity.

"*Une dame et des demoiselles de Birtancha.*"

And in walked the "flagrant" people whom the fastidious Hamilton had just denounced as inadmissible!

CHAP. XXI.

Vous allez voir un tableau des soins, des peines, des mouvements, que les pauvres mortels se donnent, pour remplir agréablement le petit espace entre leur naissance et leur mort.—LESAGE.

IN the confusion of so awkward a reception, Susan was, of course, ten times more courteous in her welcome than the occasion needed. The intruders were shaken hands with, and introduced to Augustus; and Mrs. Hamilton had now to undergo the usual routine of weatherisms;—condolences on having arrived at Baden after the close of the season; and an enumeration of all the Highnesses, royal and serene, who had

been playing the condescending at Baden during the summer to their superiors of less title-giving countries.

But while Susan bestowed her most polite attention on her guests, she could not help scrutinising them, in hopes of discovering the defects which had given such offence to her husband. What was the sin of the Burtonshaws against the refined taste of Augustus? *He* could not tell,—and how could she imagine! Mr. Hamilton had nothing worse to charge against them than an ignoble name, obscure condition, combined with rigid formality of person, which made their deprecating smiles and obsequious acquiescence ridiculous. He had not penetration to discover that it was the servility betraying their vulgarity of mind, which rendered them offensive. Possessed of a noble independence, they degraded themselves by cringing at the footstool of the great; and, after paying an assiduous court through the summer to half a dozen Russian and Prussian princesses of infamous character, and Italian duchesses the names of whose *cavalieri servi* were as notorious as those of their husbands, were all eagerness to prostrate themselves at the feet of the new comers who had the happiness to be so nearly connected with a cabinet minister!

But Mrs. Hamilton's attention was soon diverted from the showiness of Mrs. Burtonshaw's costume by the warmth of her congratulations.

“I hope, my dear madam, I am not premature in wishing you joy on the happy event in your family?”

Susan was puzzled. She had never heard of congratulations being exchanged on the entrance of a young man into the army; and Sir Edward's ensigncy was the only recent acquisition of honour to the Berkely family she was aware of. Mrs. Burtonshaw, perceiving her hesitation, began to retract.

"To be sure, the match is scarcely deserving a person of Miss Berkely's great beauty and accomplishments."

"Marcia going to be married?" ejaculated Susan. "You are mistaken, I assure you; I had a letter from her ten days ago. She is at Green-Oak with my mother."

"Exactly! — my eldest girl is in correspondence with your charming neighbour, Miss Penelope Smith. Sophia had a letter yesterday from Laxington. Sophia, my dear, what did your friend say about Miss Berkely's marriage?"

"That it was all but settled, mamma."

"All *but!* —" observed Augustus.

"And with whom?" — inquired Mrs. Hamilton, anticipating, but dreading the reply.

"My dear ma'am — this is making *too* great strangers of us!" cried Mrs. Burtonshaw, trying to look jocular. "As if you were not completely *au fait* to the whole affair!"

"I assure you I have heard nothing of it."

"Now, my dear Mrs. Hamilton!" remonstrated Pen. Smith's correspondent, while Augustus rose and walked impatiently to the window. "All Laxington has been talking of it these three months!"

"All Laxington!" murmured Augustus.

"And, though old Mr. Forbes's estate does not amount, if I understand rightly, to more than fifteen or sixteen hundred a year, (and though the old gentleman is weakly he may live a long time, — it is astonishing the number of years that valetudinarians contrive to nurse themselves through!) still, I am informed, that Mr. Forbes junior's business brings him in a very pretty income."

"Business!" and "a pretty income!" — Augustus groaned!

"And then he is such an eminent man! — I have seen Mr. Burtonshaw go without his breakfast to pore over one of Bernard Forbes's speeches: for, to own the truth, Mr. B. has a leetle touch of the radical; (I ought, perhaps, to apologise for saying so before Mr. Hamilton!) and there are few people of whom he entertains so high an opinion as your brother-in-law that is to be. Mr. B. often declares that there is the making of any thing in that young man."

Augustus quitted the room.

"I hope, my dear madam, I have not said any thing to offend Mr. Hamilton?" said "Madame de Bir-taneha," in consternation.

"And did Penelope Smith inform you how long the marriage had been settled, and when it was likely to take place?" inquired Susan, disregarding her apologies.

"Sophia, my love! suppose you were to read Mrs. Hamilton that part of the letter which relates to Miss Berkely? — I dare say you have it about you?"

Sophia looked inquiringly at her sister for advice. "Do, Sophy!" said Miss Amelia. "You can easily skip!" she added, in a lower voice, recollecting a passage or two which would not just then bear quotation.

"Ah! here it is," cried Sophia, taking the epistle from her bag. And humming over the first page till she reached the name of Berkely, she began.

"And now, my dear love, I must tell you a little bit of news which interests us extremely: indeed, since poor dear Susan Berkely's fine match, I do not know any thing that has pleased me more. We certainly are blest at Laxington with a neighbourhood such as few places have to boast of; and though the Weald people have been absent all the summer,' ahem, —

ahem, — ahem, — ‘we have had such fine doings at Stoke, that we could very well dispense with them. Sir Edward Berkely has been spending a week with his mother at Green-Oak, and a fine likely young man he is grown ; and between ourselves, my dear Sophia,’ — *ahem, — ahem, — ahem, —* ‘But to return to our sheep, — as the French say ! — The bit of news is no less than the report of a match between Miss Marcia and my *protégé* young Forbes ! You know what I told you about the share I had in making up the marriage between Susan and young Hamilton — ’’

“ You will excuse our friend Penelope, my dear madam. You know how apt she is to ramble ! ” interposed Mrs. Burtonshaw.

“ Yes, yes ! Pray read on ! ” cried Mrs. Hamilton.

“ ‘ And now,’ ” resumed Miss Sophia from the letter, “ ‘ the family may thank me as the means of bringing about Marcia’s. Not, I dare say, that they ever *will* thank me ; for you know Lady Berkely is much too — ’ ” Sophy stopped short.

“ Pray let me hear all ! ” said Susan, smiling. “ I am so anxious to learn the truth ! ”

“ Here it is then ! ” exclaimed poor Miss Sophia, having glanced over the obnoxious passage. “ ‘ For all this summer long, while the Berkelys were in town, I did nothing but hint to old Forbes and Mrs. Warren, and all the family, what a pretty match might be made up between the young people : Mr. Bernard so bookish, and Miss Marcia so bookish. Even when Bernard himself made his appearance at the Manor, on his way to the circuit, I did not lose my opportunity to drop in a little word ’ ”

“ How very officious ! ” ejaculated Susan.

“ ‘ The connection will be every thing to get Forbes forward in his profession ; because, as I observed to

him, if he would only change his politics a little—(and really, you know, he *does* go a great deal too far), Lord Laxington, I dare to say, would get him a place. And, as to Marcia, it is highly important to have her settled in life, poor thing. For Lady Berkely's health is not what it might be; and I doubt whether poor dear Mrs. Hamilton would be able to offer a house to her sister if any thing should happen to her mamma!"

"There, my dear!—That will do!"—interrupted Mrs. Burtonshaw.

"Pray, *pray* let her go on!—Does Penelope say nothing further about mamma's health?" cried Mrs. Hamilton.

"Not a word;—and you know she is so fanciful!"

"Nor about the marriage?"

"Only that Mr. Forbes has proposed, and been accepted. Having happened to call at Green-Oak just as all was settled, she wrote to us on her return home. And now, my dear Mrs. Hamilton, it is time I should allude to the real motive of my visit. I came early, to make sure of finding you at home; and Mr. B. would have accompanied me to pay his respects to Mr. Hamilton and leave a card for Lord Laxington, only he is drinking the waters, and is afraid to miss his hour. But we sadly want you to fix a day to come and dine with us in a sociable way. We cannot promise you much of a dinner here. We have nothing to make up for the venison and pinery at Burtonshaw Park. But if you *will* do us the honour (we have got, I may say, the only decent private house in Baden), you shall have the Prince and Princess Ponowski to meet you; and Count Bellerive, and the very few tolerable people left here now."

"I greatly fear it will be impossible." said Susan,

kindly ; “Lord Laxington has numerous engagements, with which it is not in my power to interfere.”

“But we shall be extremely happy in his lordship’s company. Mr. B. will call upon him immediately. Mr. B. might, perhaps, be of use in showing his lordship every thing worth seeing in the neighbourhood : for we have been here all the summer, and are quite at home ; and then they could fix the day together for the dinner party.”

“Perhaps you will give me leave to consult Mr. Hamilton, and I will let you know,” said Susan, eager to get rid of her visitors, that she might ponder on all she had heard.

“Certainly !” replied Madame de Birtancha, rising to take leave. “But I shall consider the engagement made ; and only standing over for you to name your day.”

And having favoured Mrs. Hamilton with as many smiles and curtsies as would have served the wife of a new member at an election ball, she gathered her chickens under her wings, and fussily withdrew.

CHAP. XXII.

Quand Prométhé avait fini de pétrir l’âme des laquais, il lui resta un peu de boue, avec laquelle il pétrit l’âme des grands seigneurs. — MADAME DE SABRAN.

“AND this, then, is the result of my visit to Baden !” ejaculated poor Susan, as soon as her visitors were gone. For she was still “new” enough to cherish the illusion that, though her sister’s counsels had been insufficient to prevent her docile self from forming a

marriage according to her inclinations, *she* should have been able to dissuade her sister from marrying the object of her earliest affections, had she been on the spot. But now, all was over! With Sir Edward to second him, Forbes had doubtless overcome her mother's repugnance: and Susan felt that she had henceforth the task of forbearance to play towards Marcia's husband, which Marcia had already practised towards her own. But she was also compelled to admit, with many tears, that the perfect confidence of their intercourse was at an end for ever!

And already she was beginning to feel the want of it. She had discovered that the intense affection of wedded life, the mutual all-in-allness she had read of in story, and heard of in conversation, belonged neither to the position she occupied, nor to the age she lived in. She was *not* all in all to her husband; and if Augustus desired to be all in all to *her*, he was at very little trouble to secure his object. Of Lord Lexington, she stood too much in awe to hazard any attempt to make him her friend; and, as to Julia, with the exception of the four queens which strengthened her hand at whist, there was not a female face on which she cared to cast her eyes! Susan had gained nothing by her marriage to compensate for the daily and hourly soothing of female society which had endeared the habits of her early years. There was something so tranquil, so safe, in the seclusion of Green-Oak; so holy—so happy in the moments she had passed with Marcia, unconscious of the evils of life, unwarned of the perils of society.—And, while thus pondering over the consequences of her own and her sister's marriage, the beautiful Mrs. Hamilton, an object of admiration to the Courts of England and France, and of envy to half her sex, from Lady Ashley

of Stoke to Miss Sophia Burtonshaw of Burtonshaw Park, threw herself on the sofa of her dressing-room in a very desponding attitude.

Lucky, perhaps, that our experience of the hollowness of human happiness is progressive! It would be too much for the young to learn, by a single effort of wisdom, that every vision of the poetry of life must be laid aside on its threshold; — that, like the cajolery of the schoolmaster to his new pupil, the undue enjoyments of our early days are granted to delude us into patience.—Trite as it is, the comparison of the youth of life with the youth of the year, comes home to all. Instead of contenting ourselves with violets, we waste the spring in longing for roses; and, when the roses come, and we fancy them less sweet less beautiful than anticipation painted, so that we look back regretfully to the earlier flowers of the year, our violets are already withered,—our roses withering!—Nothing remains for us but sober autumnal verdure, and the memory of the past.

Mrs. Hamilton had not cried out half her tears on the prospect of Marcia's marriage, when her husband made his appearance.

“ My dearest Hamilton ! ” cried she, starting up. “ Do you believe this report? — I have heard nothing of it from home ! ”

“ Are you referring to your sister's marriage ? ” inquired Augustus, coldly.

“ Of course I am.”

“ I see no reason to doubt it. It is an admirable arrangement. Your sister would have disdained to marry a man of the world, and live like other people; and a man of the world would have been miserable in connecting himself with a *tête exaltée*, such as hers.— You must not judge for Marcia as you would for

yourself. She will place herself at the head of a *bureau d'esprit* in Baker Street or Bloomsbury ; set up for a Madame Neckar ; and be the greatest as well as the happiest woman of the *pays Latin* ! Did you not hear your friend Mrs. Burton — (what's the woman's name ?) — inform you, that Mr. Forbes was a very *eminent man* ? — We shall doubtless live to see him on the Woolsack, and bow down our insignificance to his wife."

" This is just what I was afraid of ! I see you are as vexed as I am ! I know you detest Bernard Forbes ; and this marriage will make you dislike my sister."

" On the contrary, it suits me particularly, — for it will take her completely out of my way. Do you imagine that *my* ears alone are secure from the gossip of those old fools at Laxington ? I am quite aware of your sister's aversion to my family ; and now that she is about to marry a man whose politics form a bar to his entrance into decent society, we shall, of course, see less of her than ever."

" You do not mean that you would interdict my seeing Marcia after her marriage ? " inquired Susan, her eyes filling with tears.

" My dearest love, I would not *interdict* your seeing any one, — not even the odious people who have just left you. But you will, of course, excuse me, in your turn, from living on intimate terms with a man like Forbes : who, for reasons which it is needless to explain, is the object of my rooted aversion."

" But *do* explain them to me, — that I may at least think you justified in your dislike."

" You must even take my justification upon trust ! I can live with him only on a footing of the most distant civility."

" By which you mean *in-civility* ! "

“Perhaps so. I shall, however, be only uncivil enough to prove my resentment without provoking hostilities.”

“What a prospect!” sighed poor Mrs. Hamilton. “And with the Manor House so near to Weald, and the Warrens and Cadogans our nearest neighbours!”

“With respect to the Cadogans, they like him as little as I do. As to the Manor House, Mr. Forbes’s ‘*business*’ (as your friend Mrs. Burtonwoman calls it) leaves him little leisure for Northamptonshire. It will be hard indeed if Lord Tottenham’s and my father’s influence united, cannot make the neighbourhood too hot to hold him.”

“But why seek to injure a man of whom most people think so highly?”

“If you reckon the opinions of society by ballot, perhaps you may be right: for Forbes stands pretty well with the mob. *I* have been accustomed to look on rank and education as something in the balance; and he is scarcely less disliked in his profession, and in the House, than at Weald. What but personal disgust made you refuse him?”

“I should have disliked him as a husband; but I respect him as a sensible, upright, honourable man.”

“Respect him as much as you please. I have no wish to bias your feelings. But allow me to congratulate myself, that our sojourn abroad will prevent the necessity of being present at the family festivities of this happy occasion.—And now, about the monsters who pretend that you have engaged my father to dine with them?”

“Indeed I have taken no such liberty! I referred the matter to *you*; because I did not know what to say in excuse.”

"My dear Susan, for your own sake, you really ought to acquire more *usage du monde*!—The very first season Julia came out, she would not have committed such a blunder!"

"I was so agitated about Marcia!"

"Was it your agitation about Marcia which induced you to bow and smile at them so graciously yesterday? They construed the familiarity of your manner into an invitation to my father's house; and now, the evil is irreparable!—I shall always have these people bowing and speaking to me. Daskowicz, who saw the Maman Birtancha assail me just now, tells me they have made themselves the laughing-stock of Baden; calling upon every body, and giving dinners to all the world."

"What shall I do about them?" faltered Susan, anxious to dissipate her husband's ill-humour, and find leisure for reflection.

"Write them a note saying that my father does not intend to dine out during his sojourn here."

"But they are aware that we dine every day with the Metternichs or Rohans."

"They will see we do not choose to visit *them*, and that is enough."

"Surely it is needless to be so *very* rude? They are highly respectable people; who would feel it more than the thing is worth. Let me consult your father; he understands these things better than we do."

"By heavens! I *do* believe you *want* to go and dine with them!" cried Augustus, losing all patience. "Just like women; not caring where they go, so they can but wear their best gown and necklace, and make an exhibition of themselves!"

Susan's tears were now overflowing: and luckily, or unluckily, Lord Laxington just then claimed ad-

mittance to bring a packet of letters from England, destined to corroborate the intelligence promulgated by that ready writer and talker, Penelope Smith. Unwilling to compromise his wife's reputation with his father, by admitting that she had vulgar acquaintances and sanctioned their advances, Augustus attributed her grief to the news of her sister's approaching marriage.

"Miss Berkely going to be married to the fellow who has been making himself so offensive in the House?"—cried his lordship; "she must be out of her mind!"

"But, if no longer surprised at Susan's tears, he did not consider them the less ill-timed. It was by no means a moment to cry. He was come to announce the honour of an engagement to dine at the Favoriten Palace, in company with the Grand Dukes of Baden and Nassau, and all the *diplomats* of the Conference. Nothing could be more important than that she should look her best. The reputation of Mrs. Hamilton's beauty had preceded her from Paris; and Lord Lexington felt his honour pledged that the expectations of their Royal and Serene Highnesses should not be disappointed. Mrs. Wheeler was summoned; and diamonds and white satin ordered to be held in preparation. Susan was sentenced to lie down and compose herself,—an order which implied that heavy eyes would be held an offence to the whole family.

Augustus, meanwhile, undertook the threatened letter of apology to the Burtonshaws; and we may infer that the task was executed with sufficient ungraciousness; for not even the moody and distempered brow which Lady Berkely had worn ever since the announcement of Marcia's marriage with Bernard Forbes, could deter Pen. Smith from proceeding to

Green-Oak to give vent to the ire which a communication of the same, from the pen of Miss Sophia, excited in the sympathetic bosom of the borough of Laxington.

All the vulgarisms ever uttered on similar occasions about “fine feathers making fine birds,” and “honours changing manners,” were strung together to strengthen her representation of Mrs. Hamilton’s offence. It was fortunate for Marcia’s dignity that she had now an eloquent advocate at hand, to assist in her defence.

“Mrs. Burtonshaw is a silly, intrusive, ostentatious woman,” observed Forbes. “Her husband is much to be pitied for having so absurd a wife; and I rejoice that some one has had the sense and spirit to give her a lesson.”

He might perhaps have been less approving, had he been aware how small was Susan’s share in the ungracious proceedings he defended; which Pen. Smith reprobated in terms and tones so harsh, that the distant thunder might almost have reached the Hamiltons, as they travelled onwards to Vienna; or Lord Laxington, as he returned to England.

Long before the winter set in, they were settled in the capital of the modern Cæsars; and could any thing have reconciled poor Susan to her absence from home at such a time, it was the conviction that her husband’s presence in Northamptonshire was far from desirable at the moment of Marcia’s marriage.

CHAP. XXIII.

Men have seldom courage to be altogether good, or altogether wicked.—MACHIAVEL.

To persons accustomed to look on men and things with the eyes of the luxurious, there cannot be a pleasanter residence than Vienna.* A court, stately in its ceremonial, but simple in its domestic habits,—a wealthy and pleasure-loving aristocracy,—a city imposing without solemnity, unite to minister to the enjoyments of the great world. Social order is so admirably maintained, that the stranger in the land forgets that it is the result of virtue or coercion. On finding the fine arts so prosperous, he neglects to learn whether they be fostered through refinement and enlightenment, or as a mere duty of caste.

The environs, — beautiful even in winter, — the Danube, that mighty artery of Europe, — the Prater, with its Druid oaks, — the Bastions, with their historical associations, — afforded to Mrs. Hamilton a thousand objects of interest and inquiry. She was a welcome guest in the Imperial circle, no less than in the brilliant coteries of the Lichtensteins, Esterhazys, Palfys, Erdödys, and Schwarzenbergs. The *attachés* of the different Embassies fawned like tame lapdogs around her; and more than one Hungarian and Bohemian magnat affected allegiance to her beauty.

Still, the solace of female friendship was wanting. She languished after home, — after Marcia, — her mother. Even Mrs. Tottenham's hollow kindness would

* Written in 1833.

have been welcome. There was no one to listen to her misgivings, as she prepared for her expected child, but a smart vulgar *femme de chambre*, and the hard, self-absorbed Augustus; who, like Napoleon, had little patience with invalids. Her dolefuls rarely excited a more sympathetic reply than, "Well then, since you feel so poorly, I had better leave you quiet, and go to the Opera!" And thus, she was often alone. Whenever Susan declined a thronged and noisy party, he made it appear his *duty* to be there.

One evening,—a fine frosty evening in January, when in a close and busy city like Vienna, the whirl of the sledges passing to and fro to theatres and assemblies, gives a sort of animation to the atmosphere, Augustus returned home from a diplomatic dinner to prepare for the weekly ball of the Russian Ambassador; to which Susan had promised to accompany him. But Mrs. Hamilton was sitting wrapt in her shawl, in a large chair before the fire, engaged in the perusal of a new novel lent her by Clarence Eardley, one of the English *attachés*.

"Not yet dressed?" cried Augustus.

"I have changed my mind. It is so cold to-night, that you must be kind enough to make my excuses to Madame Tatischeff."

"Absurd! you did not complain of the weather while driving with me in the open carriage this morning, with the wind from the Kahlenberg cutting our throats."

"I believe I caught cold,—I feel so very chilly."

"Mere laziness. You are getting into habits of indifference towards the world, Susan, which may prove fatal to us both."

"I am so happy at home! So much happier than when curtsying to people whose names I seldom

distinguish one from another, or answer questions to which I have scarcely listened."

" You have such *bourgeois* notions!"

" But if they offend no one —"

" They offend *les convenances*, and they offend *me*."

" In that case," said Mrs. Hamilton, rising and laying aside her book, " I will go and dress for Madame Tatischeff's."

" Don't be long then; for the horses have been waiting an hour already!" was the gracious reply of Augustus. But just as she was going to enter her room, a letter was brought in by the servant.

" *De l'Ambassade d'Angleterre!*" said the man, delivering it to his master.

" What the devil has brought *them* to Vienna!" exclaimed Hamilton, casting his eye on the superscription; and Susan, apprehending nothing less than some indiscretion on the part of the Burtonshaws (the only persons concerning whom she had ever heard her husband utter so animated an apostrophe), judged it better to suspend her movements.

" Bid the servant say, with my compliments, that I will call to-morrow morning," said Mr. Hamilton, addressing the servant, who instantly quitted the room; and Susan plainly discerned that such a communication could not regard the Burtonshaws.

" Who is arrived?" she inquired timidly.

" The Cadogans."

" The Cadogans of Everleigh?"—and involuntarily she reiterated her husband's exclamation of " What can have brought *them* to Vienna!"

" The dulness of Northamptonshire, I imagine!" he replied, apparently not choosing any one but himself to call their movements in question. " They are at the Hotel on the Freyung."

"What an acquisition Mrs. Cadogan will be to me!" ejaculated Mrs. Hamilton. "I wanted a country-woman to talk to sometimes. And she is so cheerful and so pleasant."

"Cadogan is a devil of a bore!" said Hamilton, deliberately setting fire to the note, and allowing it to burn on the china stove.

"But indeed *she* is a charming person! I have often told you that if you saw more of Caroline you would like her. I hope we shall be a great deal together here. Perhaps she is only lately come from Everleigh!—Perhaps she was at dear Marcia's wedding!—Yes!—as a relation of the family, she *must* have been at the wedding. How I long to see her and inquire about mamma and Green-Oak. *Do* let me go to-night, dear Augustus! The carriage is at the door."

"I thought you were afraid of the weather?"

"Not in my mantle, and this morning dress."

"Mrs. Cadogan would think you mad!"

"Oh! no. It is only natural I should wish to learn something about home. Years ago, when she was Caroline Warren, we were intimate friends."

"But she is not Caroline Warren now; and you ought to reflect a little before you take a step that will place you, during her stay here, on so familiar a footing."

"And why not be on a familiar footing? The Cadogans live in the best society abroad."

"Yes—*abroad*. In a foreign country, every one rises a grade in society."

"She will be presented, of course, and we shall meet her every where. *Do* let me go to her to-night!"

"Did you not hear me send word by the servant, that I should not call till the morning?" said Augustus,

with a qualm of conscience, as he looked upon the beautiful face of his wife flushed with eagerness and bright with ingenuous feelings.

"But you said nothing about *me*; and arriving in a strange place, among strangers, people are always glad to welcome a familiar face. I do so long to inquire about Marcia!"

"If you wish to oblige *me*, you will go and dress for Madam Tatischeff's, and defer your visit till to-morrow."

"But you will take me there directly after breakfast?"

"Certainly; — or bring Mrs. Cadogan to call upon *you*. You must not over-fatigue yourself. You will be tired with your ball to-night."

"Let *you* go and bring her, in order to give you an opportunity of inquiring after Lady Ashley?" said his wife, with an arch smile.

"Pray go and dress, Susan, — it is getting late!" cried Hamilton, fretfully. "Wheeler! your lady is waiting for you. The Archduchess Sophia is to be at the Tatischeffs; and it is already ten o'clock!"

"The Cadogans at Vienna! How very delightful!" was Susan's often-renewed exclamation, as the business of the toilet proceeded. "Caroline will be such a comfort to me! How glad, how *very* glad I am they are come!" —

CHAP. XXIV.

Entre époux de qualité, on se doit des égards.

Le Marchand Provençal.

HAD Mr. Cadogan of Everleigh Hall belonged to any continental country, he might have been cited as an eccentric character. But, viewed as a native of England, where custom, and the force of social prejudice, form a secondary code of legislation, he must be regarded as one of a class ; of a very extensive one, nay, a very respectable, — if that can be denominated respectable which is utterly useless to the community.

He was, in the first place, a man of many thousands a year, and sprung from an ancient family. The Cadogans had changed neither their religion nor their estate since that union of the Two Roses which formed the signal for such vast transitions in faith and property. They had done nothing, and consequently *suffered* nothing, during the struggles of the protectorate or the inauguration of King William of glorious and immortal memory. No excesses of zeal or ambition had entailed upon them humiliating retractions. They were still the Cadogans of Everleigh Hall ; — dignified only by shadowy pretensions to an extinct peerage.

Rodolph Cadogan, the present representative of the family, had been born and educated under the cloud which overhung the prospects of Catholicism at the commencement of the present century. His parents, long lukewarm in their faith, considered it rather a point of honour than a point of duty to rear their only son in the religion of his forefathers, at a time when its parent church was plunged in such an abyss of degradation. They had not courage to desert the banner so stained and tattered. Rodolph was accordingly

brought up a Roman Catholic, without the slightest vocation for the creed of Rome ; and, like all wealthy Roman Catholics of that epoch, without calling, profession, or prospect. His career was a predestined blank. He had nothing to do, nothing to expect.

Luckily, he had neither fervour, faith, generosity, nor meanness enough, to become a partizan. He did not intrigue for Emancipation, because his position in the world was sufficiently eligible without it ; his mind having been so well trained to its destinies, that he scarcely noticed their limitation. But without aim or end in life, he supplied the hiatus by the ambition of being considered what is called a “remarkably gentlemanlike man.” The term has become a vulgarism ; some people call it “gentlemanly,” some “gentlemanlike.” It is not the less the designation of a caste in Great Britain.

Now “a gentlemanly man,” according to the vulgar type, is one with tact enough to keep his passions, opinions, and tastes within limits of decent moderation. He must not offend the public eye, the public ear, the public conscience : must be neither violent in his politics, vehement in his affections, nor eccentric in his dress. His voice must be moderate, his address unpretending ; his equipage neither before nor after the fashion. An air of easy competence reigns in his establishment. He gives generously, but not ostentatiously. His gratuities should not be considerable enough for quotation, or his dress so remarkable as to be imitated. By all this, it will be perceived that he is one whose greatness consists in his mediocrity.

No one could be better calculated for such a vocation than Cadogan of Everleigh. Of a passionless temperament, he had so magnified, to his own esteem, the opinion of the world, that he had learned to dote

on it as on a favourite mistress ; to load it with the incense of his adoration ; to sacrifice his fortune and convenience to its caprices. He chose his friends, his habitation, his habits, according to its whims. It is the cue, indeed, of the gentlemanly man, while following in meek subservience the dictates of society, to affect unbounded independence. But his fetters did not the less exist, for being concealed under the five ells of fine broadcloth with which Cosmo de Medicis used to boast he could, at any time, create a man of respectability.

In one instance, Cadogan of Everleigh had overstepped his vocation. To have sought as his wife the affianced wife of another, militated no less against good manners than good morals. He was rather ashamed of the proceeding, even after it had procured him so beautiful a wife. An apprehension that his marriage had lowered him in the opinion of the neighbourhood of Laxington, was the motive of his frequent residences on the continent ; and though he felt that the affairs of obscure unobtrusive people like the Warrens and Forbeses, were not likely to reach the ear of the great world, he imposed a penance upon his wife for the outrage into which her beauty had beguiled him, in the form of the most rigid, scrupulous, and circumstantial conformity to the ceremonial of society. His ghastly idol must be made aware that they had not sinned against its enactments either through ignorance, or insubordination !

Such was the true nature of an individual known with esteem and applause in the *coteries* of London, Paris, Naples, Rome ; whose address was unimpeachable—whose politeness unvaried—whose hat well-brushed—whose clothes well-made ;—whose dinners, warmly accepted, were cited neither for good nor evil

report—who was, in short, *par excellence*, so gentlemanly a man!—*Not fellow*.—No one had ever dreamed of calling him a “gentlemanly *fellow*.” From the day of his quitting the college of Stonyhurst to that of his arrival at the hotel on the Freyung, his quiet, good breeding would have repelled such a familiarity. He had a high opinion of the Hamiltons, and was delighted when Lord Laxington came to settle in his neighbourhood; for his lordship stood on the best terms with society, and did not fill so marked a station in the Shetland Cabinet as to have attracted the enmity of the public. On the contrary, it was part of the business of the Right Hon. George to act as moderator or conciliator between his party and the House; and the moderator of a party may be justly considered as, by reservation, its “gentlemanly man.”

The Caroline, so impatient of her subjection at Fir Grove, had only been transferred, therefore, to a different mode of slavery. But it was one that suited her better than subservience to the stern rationality of her cousin Forbes. Narrow as was the line drawn for her by Mr. Cadogan, it was a pathway that lay wholly in the sunshine. He exacted from her merely those duties imposed, on a grander scale, by the Hamiltons, on the gentle Susan. The difference demanded by their respective situations, was, that Lord Laxington required his daughter-in-law to attract, as Mr. Cadogan desired his wife to avoid, the admiration of the world. Caroline, her high-spirit apart, would have gloried in fulfilling the duties imposed upon Susan; and Susan would perhaps have —— But no!—her heart was too soft and affectionate to admit of being happy as the partner of a frigid egotist.

There is no possibility of becoming attached to such a man. The very atmosphere he breathes is chilling.

Caroline had married, indeed, to free herself from an unsuitable engagement. But the passionate impulses of her nature required only fosterage to have been cheered into virtue. Too much in awe of the irony of society to venture on such an effort, Cadogan soon explained to her that it was the business of two well-bred people, living in the world, to walk hand in hand through life, looking straight before them, without turning towards each other with familiar gestures of affection. And Caroline obeyed. But she despised him. She became, at his desire, the gentle, calm, moderate, *lady-like* Mrs. Cadogan of Everleigh ; but the "waste of feelings unemployed" was a burden to her ; and verily she had her revenge.

Under the semblance of submission, she exercised unlimited influence over her husband. His superior in abilities, but devoid of opinions or ambitions contrary to his view of human gentlemanliness, she contrived, with a little dexterity, to make him go where she liked, and do as she pleased.

"Let us pass the winter abroad," she had said, on returning into Northamptonshire from their autumn tour. "I am sure you will be miserable at Everleigh. My cousin Bernard's marriage will bring him frequently into the neighbourhood of Laxington, and you well know how much you dislike him. Lady Ashley, too, is coming to spend the winter at Stoke. As near neighbours, it will be impossible for me to fulfil your injunction of gradually breaking off my connection with her. The Hamiltons do not return to Weald till Spring ; and I should be left to the society of Lady Ashley, whose manners are so displeasing to you."

"You must admit that they are coarser and more abrupt than they used to be."

"Most pictures grow darker with age."

"But the tints usually become subdued. Whereas Lady Ashley has the bad taste to make herself talked about by affecting eccentricity, and exhibiting Lady Leighton's license, without her wit. Towards *me*, more particularly, she assumes a bantering tone wholly insufferable."

Mrs. Cadogan, better acquainted, perhaps, than her husband with the motive of this *persiflage*, coloured deeply as she again observed that, to break off the connection by degrees, it would be as well to pass the winter on the continent.

"You are tired of Paris," said she. "Rome does not agree with me. Let us go to Berlin."

"No! I prefer Vienna!" said Cadogan authoritatively; in accordance with his system of maintaining his own opinions against those of his wife.

"I don't think I should like Vienna," she observed, with seeming unconcern. "There is so much dissipation: such an endless round of pleasure: so much state — so much show!"

"I shall *not* go to Berlin, nevertheless," cried Cadogan, fancying he was doing as he liked. "The Hamiltons will be at Vienna, this winter, which would afford us a pleasant introduction. I have an aunt, too, in the chapter of Savoy, and my old tutor is Superior of the Scotch Benedictines. Yes! I have made up my mind. We will go to Vienna. We must not lose time. Let the servants know we start on Thursday. The first fortnight in December is always mild. Let us have no foolish procrastinations, and we shall be settled there before Christmas."

"As you please," replied Mrs. Cadogan, with mild resignation. "I should have *preferred* Berlin. But I dare say we shall be very well amused at Vienna."

And at Vienna they were accordingly arrived.

CHAP. XXV.

Qui t'inspire cette finesse,
Ces traits choisis, — cet agrément,
Qui voilent le raisonnement,
Et font badiner la tendresse ?

VOISENON.

“ How very kind of you to visit me so soon ! ” cried Mrs. Cadogan, rising from her sofa to embrace Mrs. Hamilton with the warmth which distance from home imparts to the calm demeanour of the English. “ Mr. Hamilton promised me you would come ; but I intended to forestal you by waiting on you this morning.”

“ Has Augustus been here, then ? ”

“ For a moment. Mr. Cadogan is gone with him to choose horses for me. You are looking much better, my dear Mrs. Hamilton, than his account of you induced me to expect.”

“ Did he say I was looking ill ? ”

“ He said you were an invalid.”

“ When did you leave England ? ” inquired Susan abruptly. “ Is it long since you were at Everleigh ? Have you seen mamma or Marcia lately ? ”

“ I saw Lady Berkely about six weeks ago, a few days previous to your sister’s marriage. She was very well ; but hurried and nervous, just as mammas always are when marrying a daughter.”

“ And Marcia ? ”

“ Calm and impenetrable as usual ; but, I am persuaded, perfectly happy. By the way, we are now connections by marriage,” said Caroline with a significant smile.

"I wish I could laugh about it!" exclaimed Susan. "But the harsh, disagreeable character which made Mr. Forbes so odious both to you and myself, leads me to tremble for Marcia."

"And why, my dear Mrs. Hamilton? *Her* modes of thinking and feeling differ so widely from ours, that it was impossible the same person should suit all three. Besides (let us do poor Bernard justice!) his character, though disagreeable, is not harsh. I have a notion he will be a devoted husband to an attached wife. Men who are all graciousness to the world, often exclude their wives from the benefit of their good temper; and it is often the fruit of roughest rind that is sweetest at the core."

Susan's experience suggested so much in confirmation of Mrs. Cadogan's aphorisms, that she did not venture to reply.

"And yet," said she, finding it necessary to say something, "I cannot think, with patience, of Bernard Forbes as the husband of my sister. Much as I wished to return to England for my confinement, their marriage reconciles me to remaining at Vienna."

"There is, I own, something repellent in my cousin; —an air of sitting in judgment,—of conscious superiority. One does not like to be made to feel so little."

"I could mention many persons quite as eminent as himself," said Susan, "with whom I feel perfectly at ease."

"Eminence is such an arbitrary thing! Forbes, for instance, would probably challenge the greatness of *our* great men! I have heard *him* define greatness as the power of increasing, by precept or example, the virtue or happiness of mankind. *He* does not think much of generals and prime-ministers."

"I dare say they return the compliment," said

Susan pettishly. “But I wish he had not robbed me of my sister.—And now, tell me, shall you remain here all the winter?”

“I hope so: I am not fond of travelling, and was very averse to bringing the children so far, this cold weather. But now we *are* here, and that I find *you* here, I should be equally sorry to move.”

“The society at Vienna is on a far pleasanter footing than the thousand circles of London, and the hundred of Paris,” observed Susan. “*Here* it constitutes one large family; — divided like most large families by strifes and envyings, but unanimous on the point of making life pass away as gaily as possible. Nor have I seen any thing of the *morgue* attributed in England to the high aristocracy of the empire. The truth is that, living among their equals, they have no one to call forth a show of pride.”

“Most true! It is the mixture of society in England which provokes both servility and hauteur; and if ever—”

She was interrupted! — The door of the ante-room was half opened, and Augustus Hamilton’s head peeped in.

“Ah! you are here!” said he, addressing his wife, and only bowing to Mrs. Cadogan. “I scarcely knew whether it would be worth while to come back for you. I thought you would not be able to get out so early.”

“I can get out early, when I have sufficient inducement,” replied Susan, colouring deeply for her husband’s want of courtesy towards her companion; and, apparently unaware that a very pretty woman, to whom a man behaves ungraciously in presence of his wife, is a legitimate object for that wife’s mistrust.

“I have got Countess Harrach’s box at the Kärn-

ner Thor to-night," pursued Hamilton, still addressing his wife ; " shall you be well enough to go ?"

" Certainly, if Mrs. Cadogan will accompany me. Do !" said she, turning unceremoniously towards Caroline. " You will see Brugnoli and the Elslers."

" I shall see *you*, and have a great deal more chat about England. Yes ! — I will go with pleasure !" replied Mrs. Cadogan, — sure of her husband's assent to her visiting so correct a place, in so correct a way.

" Had we not better call for Mrs. Cadogan ?" said Susan, timidly, to her husband, dreading some further courtesy on the part of Augustus. " I dare say Mr. Cadogan and you have not yet settled about the horses ?"

" Pray do not let me be more troublesome than is necessary," observed Caroline ; " I can have the *remise* belonging to the hotel."

" Oh no ! — I shall have the greatest pleasure in calling for you. You must not think of the *remise* !" said Susan, more warmly,—so warmly as to add to the embarrassment of her husband.

" Mrs. Hamilton will be with you soon after eight," said Augustus, in the cool, dictatorial tone of a man who addresses his wife ; and there was altogether an expression in his look and manner which Caroline recorded for future resentment.

It was Susan, however, of course, who paid the penalty. That night, when Mrs. Hamilton found herself seated opposite her friend, to witness the performance of " Ottavio Pinelli," she could not but notice the exquisite *recherche* of Caroline's toilet. It is the custom to rail against the bad taste of Englishwomen ; and the aspect of an English ball-room, or English crowd, urges little in their defence. But the one in a hundred English women

who is unfortunate enough to possess that little touch of coquetry almost invariably inherent in the French, is the best-dressed woman in the world. A sense of propriety modifies her taste, an air of cleanliness and purity enhances her beauty. Mrs. Cadogan, in the *demie-toilette* appropriate to the occasion and a cap just issued from the hands of Madame Langer, looked so pretty, so elegant, that Susan did not wonder her box should be crowded by the visits of Clarence Eardley and half a dozen *attachés* of the French and Russian embassy ; or, that it should attract the fixed glass of the pale, slender, interesting Duke of Reichstadt.

Yet so blind was Hamilton to the motive of their assiduity, that he was evidently irritated by the attentions of Susan's visitors. She, who understood, or fancied she understood, every turn of her husband's countenance, detected in a moment his fit of jealousy : and longed to whisper that it was Mrs. Cadogan, and not herself, who formed the object of attraction. But her representations would have been ineffectual. Augustus was thoroughly out of humour : and nothing but the impassive good breeding of Cadogan prevented his noticing the caustic and sneering remarks of his friend : nay, though seemingly pre-occupied by the sallies of Clarence Eardley, Caroline herself was fully alive to Hamilton's ungraciousness. When he visited her husband the following day, to make arrangements respecting his admission to the club, and Cadogan sent to inform her of his arrival, she pleaded an engagement, and remained invisible.

Augustus returned home to his wife, to revenge upon *her* his mortification.

" How much lower do you intend to let those weeping willows of yours descend ? " said he, as they sat

at dinner together ; alluding to the soft flexible ringlets which, in his days of courtship, he had so often implored her to preserve sacred from the innovations of French fashion. “ No woman can ever look distinguished, who wears her hair in that detestable way.”

“ I will have them cut off immediately,” said Susan, waving her head to throw back the offending ringlets from her face. “ Lord Laxington has often desired me never to change my way of dressing my hair, for which he has some particular preference. But, as your father is not here to resent my disobedience, Wheeler shall exert her skill to-morrow. Perhaps you admire Caroline Cadogan’s style? If so, I will take care that mine shall be as like it as possible.”

“ No !” replied Hamilton, whom something in her gentle voice had touched with compunction. “ On second thoughts, I would not have you alter it. It reminds me of the period when I first saw you at Weald.—No!—I cannot part with the ringlets.—If Mrs. Cadogan had such silken hair as yours, she would not trouble her head about the mode of dressing it.”

Tears came into Susan’s eyes as she listened. It was the first time, for many days, that Augustus had addressed her so affectionately ; and she bent her head over her plate to conceal her emotion. For Hamilton was a sworn enemy to any thing approaching to a scene ;—and she could not bear that he should despise her, even for loving him too tenderly.

CHAP. XXVI.

*La femme tour à tour, héroïque, ingénue,
Sans cesse révélée, et sans cesse inconnue,
Forte dans sa vertu, légère dans ses jeux,
Est l'être le plus faible, et le plus courageux.*

RESSEGUIER.

THE two families soon became inseparable. With the exception of the amiable Ambassadress, with whom, from some political motive, Lord Laxington had charged his daughter-in-law to form no particular intimacy, and the Burtonshaws, who were under a similar interdiction from Augustus, there was not one of Susan's countrywomen settled that winter in Vienna; and her appreciation of her good fortune in Mrs. Cadogan's arrival was proportionably great. Moving in the same sphere, and devoting their time to the same objects, every thing seemed to favour their intercourse. There was nothing in the frigid politeness of Cadogan to give umbrage to the jealous susceptibilities of Augustus. They engaged a box in common at the Court Theatre, and constantly appeared together in society.

Susan had not felt so happy since her marriage. Few women, and none worthy the name, can dispense with the society of their own sex. Whatever preference they may accord, at times, to the more elevated tone of masculine conversation or the more flattering homage of male devotion, there are moments of sickness, moments of sadness, when nothing but a woman's sympathy will suffice.

From this source, arises the surest retribution of female errors. The disrespect of the other sex is

cutting to the offender ; but the desertion of her own insupportable. A bond of sympathy exists among women, unappreciated till circumstances enforce its rupture. The *maladie de pays* is only experienced at a distance from our native country ; the yearning after female companionship is only understood by those women who have been restricted to listen to the harsh voices, and appeal to the hard hearts, of the rougher and more egoistical sex.

Susan became once more a cheerful creature after chatting of old friends and old times ; — the management of her future nursery ; — the prospects of her season in town : and great, indeed, was her vexation on receiving from her sister Marcia the following reply to her communication of the pleasant change in her position : —

“ Do not be angry with me, dearest, for expressing some regret at hearing of your intimacy with the Cadogans. With all possible allowance for the satisfaction you must derive, so far from home and under your present circumstances, from the society of an old acquaintance, I cannot but deeply lament to see your ingenuous nature the dupe of Caroline’s profound hypocrisy. It is not in my power to express myself more clearly. But, believe me, and believe Bernard, — (who, however you may feel towards him, dearly loves you) — that you cannot bestow your friendship more unworthily. Observe that you *must* not show this letter to Mr. Hamilton.

“ We are now settled in town, preparing for an arduous session. Edward is on a visit at Claneustace Court. He has great influence over Lord C. ; who, since his arrival in England, has taken up political opinions supposed to be particularly mortifying to Lord Laxington. I augur great things of Claneustace.

Among other titles to our good opinion, he has offered to bring Edward into Parliament ; and—”

The step of Augustus, traversing the adjoining room, proved, for the first time, an unweleome interruption to his wife. He was not to see her letter. But how was this to be effected ? Mrs. Cadogan would have concealed it under the cushions of the sofa,—in her handkerchief,—in her bosom,—in half the time it took for Susan to ask herself the question ; and by way of escaping the notice of Augustus, she was standing opposite the door when he entered the room, trembling violently, and holding Marcia’s epistle in her hand.

“ What is the matter ? ” said he, as she folded it up. “ Is the courier arrived ? Have you letters from England ? ”

“ Two from your father, and one from William Tottenham, are lying on your dressing-table,” answered Susan, in a phrase as nearly approaching to equivocation as her honest nature could devise.

“ And the one you were reading when I came in ? Was *that* from my father ? ”

“ No ! ”

“ From Julia ? ”

“ Julia never writes to me.”

“ You blush so deeply, one might almost swear you had been reading a letter from Lady Leighton. If so, pray afford me a share in your consternation. Her ladyship’s style must be very peculiar. *Was* it from Lady Leighton ? ”

“ What makes you fancy I would correspond with a woman I so particularly dislike ? ”

“ The perversity of your sex. Besides, you only fancy yourself shocked at her ; just as women make a fuss about drinking champagne.”

"I do not protest against champagne, though I do against Lady Leighton," said Susan, glad to have gained time to put aside the fatal letter, but unsuccessful in diverting her husband's attention.

"I wish you would protest against the folly of making mysteries out of nothing," cried he. "From whom was that letter?"

"From Marcia."

"Forbes must have already imparted to her the secret of his professional eloquence, since her epistles move you so strangely!"

"I assure you she has communicated nothing very interesting," faltered Susan, growing more and more confused. "Why don't you go and read your father's letters?"

Augustus rang the bell, and directed the valet, who made his appearance from the ante-room, to fetch the letters from his dressing-table. He seemed determined not to leave his wife alone. Nor did Lord Laxington's epistles tend to soften his ill-humour. Irritated by the secession of Claneustace, his lordship did not scruple to attribute the defection of his ward to the influence of Sir Edward, his radical brother-in-law. William Tottenham's communications were scarcely of a more cheering nature. Written during the first week in January, under the pressure of London fog and Christmas bills, the Honourable William beheld his own prospects and those of the country in the gloomiest light.

"Does your father tell you any news?" inquired Susan, timidly, when he had done reading.

"None but what you, doubtless, know already,—that Claneustace has thrown himself into Opposition. A pretty reward for all my father's kindness!"

"Are his opinions of any particular importance to Lord Laxington?"

"How can you ask such cursed silly questions! Don't you see that, in the event of a dissolution, my father loses three votes, besides having already lost Claneustace in the Lords, which — many thanks to him — is of no great consequence."

"And will all this prove very injurious to your father?" inquired Susan, still pre-occupied by her own embarrassment.

"All this? All *what*? — I hate to hear you utter a word about politics: you talk so like a fool! The other day, dining at the Cadogans', I was quite ashamed of you."

"You know I always evade that sort of conversation," said Mrs. Hamilton, blushing for her own incapacity. "But Mr. Cadogan asked questions I could not but answer. One is *obliged* to give a direct reply to a direct inquiry."

"Not always:—or you would not have equivocated in so absurd a way about Mrs. Forbes's mysterious letter —"

"There was nothing mysterious about it," faltered Susan.

"There *was*,— or you would have shown it me at once! It is not in your nature to be so close without a motive."

Susan was touched. Perhaps it would be better to show him the letter at once, than expose herself to further suspicion. "If you are uneasy on the subject, pray read it," said she, placing it in his hand.

"No! I never wish to extort people's confidence. If you had a mind to be candid, you would not have sported with my curiosity. I have not the least desire to intrude upon your family secrets."

"Indeed, indeed, I have no family secrets," faltered Mrs. Hamilton, checking the hysterical pain in her

throat which threatened tears. “ Pray, dear Augustus, read it.”

“ I am much obliged to you ! ” he replied ; for, certain of his mark, he still affected to refuse.

“ In justice to *me*, in *kindness* to me ! ”

“ I am not aware that you stand in need of either.”

“ Then I must read it to you myself ; for I cannot bear you should think me guilty of duplicity.” And with a panting bosom, and unassured voice, she opened the letter and proceeded as far as — “ Do not be angry with me, dearest — ” The words overcame her ! — It seemed as if Marcia were addressing her, and addressing her in the tone of kindness which, just then, she so sadly needed ; — and, unable to utter another syllable, she placed the letter in the hands of her husband and quitted the room. She wanted to cry unseen. She wanted to relieve herself of the heavy load of bitterness with which her heart was overcharged.

But Augustus, although tolerably aware of the state of her feelings, was too much exasperated by the perusal of the unlucky letter to compassionate her tears. Having followed her into her room, he threw it down with violence on the table.

“ I am obliged to you ! ” cried he. “ I now fully appreciate your generosity in showing me the letter. — Thank you, Susan, — thank you ! — But do not imagine that I am to be intimidated by the vapouring of your sister, or the insolence of the vulgar demagogue with whom she has obligingly connected us. The only change in my proceedings, or your own, which Mrs. Forbes’s officious interference will tend to operate is, that, from this moment, I forbid all intercourse between you, except such as passes in my presence or through my hands.”

"With my sister?" faintly articulated Susan.

"With your sister. I might have guessed what I had to expect from one who could ally herself with a low-minded adventurer; who had been the professed admirer of her own sister. Commend me to the delicacy of your strait-laced prudes, who take fire at the mere whisper of human frailty, while themselves exhibiting every weakness sanctioned by the sophistry of society!"

Bewildered by a degree of fury which nothing contained in Marcia's letter appeared, in *her* eyes, to justify, Susan sat in mute submission during this attack upon her sister. She now recovered herself; and, with the utmost grace and dignity, did justice to the merits of Mrs. Forbes; nor, so measured was her voice and so serene her countenance, did Hamilton conjecture the painful struggle passing in her mind. It was not till he saw her sink insensible from her chair upon the floor, at the close of her expostulations, that he felt he had gone too far!

CHAP. XXVII.

Qu'une amie véritable est une douce chose !
 Elle cherche nos besoins au fond de notre cœur :
 Et nous épargne la pudeur
 De les lui découvrir nous-mêmes !

LA FONTAINE.

NEXT day all Vienna was talking of the illness of Mrs. Hamilton. Every body was concerned to hear of her indisposition; and every body pretended to be still more so. At Princess Hunyadi's ball, that night, every guest was "inexpressibly shocked" to learn

that she was in danger ; more particularly, when it was understood that the Archduchess Sophia had called in person to inquire after her, and the Empress despatched her own physician to her aid.

It was a fine subject for ejaculation, too, that the other English beauty, the Frau von Kadoogan (for, thanks to the Blenheim campaign and the wig bequeathed to posterity by one of its heroes, Cadogan is, in Germany, a familiar word) had stationed herself in the *ruelle* of the charming sufferer, devoting herself to the duties of a nurse. For two whole days nothing was rhapsodised about but the interesting position of the two friends ; and, from hour to hour, a still more exciting catastrophe was anticipated, in the death of the invalid. When lo ! in reply to the inquiries of the last chamberlain vouchsafed by their Imperial Majesties to inquire after the daughter-in-law of an English cabinet minister, it was announced that Mrs. Hamilton was the mother of a son, and the infant and herself “as well as could be expected !”

The public was a little, and Augustus Hamilton *not* a little, disappointed : the public because its anxieties were at an end, Augustus because *his* were beginning. He rightly conjectured how unwelcome to his father would be the news of the birth of a sickly, seven months’ heir to the honours of the house of Laxington ; and, great as was his terror during the sufferings of his wife, he could scarcely reconcile himself to the sight of the wretched little being which his ungovernable temper had forced into existence. Susan was satisfied with it ! — Engrossed by the hope of preserving its life, Susan had already forgotten the origin of her sickness and peril. It was by no effort of generosity she drove the recollection of Hamilton’s savageness from her mind. Her child was beside her,

and she had nothing else to care for on earth. The entreaties of Augustus for forgiveness appeared incomprehensible. She suffered him to embrace her. She suffered her dear Caroline to load her with congratulations ; and only wished they would be silent, that she might listen to the faint, faint breathing of her babe.

"Lord help us, my dear Lady B.!" cried Pen-Smith (who flew with her congratulations to Green-Oak the moment the County Chronicle announced, in its largest letters—"At Vienna, on the 28th of February, the lady of the Honourable Augustus Hamilton of a son and heir!") "how every thing *does* seem to prosper with that dear creatur'! After living boxed up here at Green-Oak, year after year, she makes one of the first matches in England ; takes the lead in tip-top company, goes to court, pleases every body ; and now, you see, the very first child's a son and heir ; a fine thriving babe, no doubt!—There's poor dear Mrs. William Tottenham, nothing but a little girl. To be sure it does not much signify in that quarter, for I take it there be little enough for those that come after them!—Then look at poor dear Mrs. Cadogan. Two little daughters, and Everleigh Hall as strictly entailed on male issue as law can make it! And, by the by, my dear ma'am, how vastly lucky that Mrs. Cadogan should have been at hand to look after poor dear Mrs. Hamilton in her illness,—poor inexperienced young thing!"

"Yes! her presence takes considerable uneasiness off my mind," replied Lady Berkely, with an inscrutable expression of countenance.

"Mrs. Warren was lamenting t'other day, when I talked of her daughter, that Mr. Cadogan had such a predilection for foreign countries. Caroline hates

living abroad, it seems ; but, like a good wife, submits to his whims. For my part, I think most Papists are eaten up with whims and vagaries. However, I shall now be apt to forgive Mr. Cadogan, poor man ! since his dislike to Northamptonshire has been the means of getting poor dear Mrs. Hamilton — (sweet creatur' !) — properly nursed. I've a great regard for Mrs. Forbes ; but, as I was saying to Dr. Mangles last night at tea, Miss Susan was always my first favourite. But the Mangleses, though the best folks in the world (as I'm sure your ladyship will admit), have their fault, (who has not ?) — My friend Mrs. M. is a little touchy ; and she can't get over the unhandsome treatment received by her cousin Burtonshaw. To be sure, we have only heard one side of the case. We don't at all know what poor dear Mrs. Hamilton may have to say in apology."

" Is your friend, Mrs. Mangles, in correspondence then with the Burtonshaws ? "

" My friend Mrs. M. in correspondence ? — My dear, good Lady Berkely, you must be joking ! — As if Mrs. Mangles ever found time to take up a pen, unless to copy a recipe into her family book ! — No ! my dear ma'am, it was through *my* instrumentality the news of Mrs. Burtonshaw's indignation transpired ! Mrs. B.'s second daughter, Sophia — (a sweet creatur', with very pretty talents, if she'd been in a situation of life to cultivate them !) is my frequent correspondent : a very lively mind, ma'am, — quite a Madame de Seviny with her pen ! "

" You must favour me with the perusal of some of her charming letters !" cried Lady Berkely, seizing the hint. " My daughter is too lazy to be a good correspondent. And it would be highly gratifying to learn something of the style of society at Vienna :

which, I am persuaded, no one could describe better than your accomplished friend."

" Well, to be sure!" cried Pen., highly delighted. " To think that Mrs. Warren and your ladyship should have daughters living in the grandest circle of a great foreign city, yet have to apply to me, — poor *me*, — for news of what is going on there !"

" Do the Burtonshaws go much into the world at Vienna ?" inquired Lady Berkely, almost piqued out of her curiosity.

" To be sure they do, my dear ma'am. If they don't who should ? A clear twelve thousand a year, and only two girls to inherit it ! Colonel Eardley's brother, Clarence Eardley, who is what they call a Tashy at Vienna (and what that may be, you probably understand better than I) is making up to one of the Burtonshaw girls ; and as he is hand and glove with all the great folks and always in company with the Cadogans, Hamiltons, and such, my friends hear all the news from him. But I'm afraid I must be going, for I'm not quite easy about the weather. Before I came out, the wind had come round a point to the south, and if we don't have a sprinkling of rain before night, I'm very much mistaken ! — Good morning, my dear ma'am. Make my respects to Mrs. Hamilton and the little stranger."

" I will call upon you the moment I have further news of them," said Lady Berkely, eager to conciliate a person from whom she expected intelligence that nearly concerned the happiness of her favourite daughter. For it was only through some indirect channel, she could hope to ascertain the real degree of Susan's ignorance with regard to the attachment supposed to subsist between her husband and Mrs. Cadogan.

CHAP. XXVIII.

With shallow jesters and rash bavin wits
He ambles up and down.

SHAKSPERE.

VARIOUS classes of people have various modes of dividing the kalendar year: Sportsmen and booksellers begin their “season” in September; fox-hunters in October; Harlequin and columbine in December; the Lords and Commons in January.

Lord Laxington’s season, the session, having accordingly commenced, he began to miss the company of his son and daughter-in-law. His house was disorganised,—his dinner-table dull; and, moreover, the mission of Augustus was fully accomplished. His lordship wrote, therefore, to desire their immediate return. He said nothing of Mrs. Hamilton’s recent illness beyond his regret that the infant, under such circumstances, should have been born alive; and, whereas the dames of the baggage-waggon are able to proceed on their line of march, within a few days of events of the same interesting nature, nothing could be more generous than that a month’s nursing should be vouchsafed to Susan, before she was snatched from her sick bed, to traverse the worst roads in the worst weather. Lord Laxington did not, indeed, specify the number of days to be conceded to her recovery. He only said, “Let me beg you to quit Vienna as soon as possible. Take leave the first opportunity, and do not loiter on the road.”

But, on this hint, Mrs. Cadogan stood forth a bold champion for the invalid. “A journey, in such weather, would be death to Susan,—death to the

child. She held herself responsible," she said, "for Mrs. Hamilton's safety, and it would be impossible for her to travel before the month of April." She even obtained a medical certificate to that effect.

Trembling for the fragile existence of her infant, Susan was grateful to her friend for this prompt and efficient interposition. She felt how unwelcome to her husband must be the necessity of remaining at Vienna, when he had hoped to be in England in time for a fortnight's hunting; and when his brother-in-law's letters announced London to be already full,—the Opera open,—the clubs busy. But since her illness, Augustus had taken a new turn. He was now all attention, all kindness, all consideration. Her happiness appeared his first object,—more than it had ever been,—more than she had hoped it ever would become. He was now *really* all in all to her. Mr. Cadogan went about amusing himself *en garçon* with Clarence Eardley, Prince This, Count That, and Baron the Other; frequenting *bals masqués*, and breakfasts of opera dancers, because, in Vienna, libertinism is a thing to which even gentlemanly men are prone. But Augustus was immaculate! There he sat, in the quiet room, or the chamber adjoining the quiet room, of the convalescent; with none but Mrs. Cadogan to share his devoted attentions.

Yet no one would have wondered at the change, who was a spectator of the scene. Impossible to imagine any thing more exquisitely lovely than Susan Hamilton in her soft languor and matronly undress. The "pretty pale wife," so beautifully described by Lord Edward Fitzgerald, could not have been prettier or paler,—nor Correggio's tenderest Madonna more hallowedly blest. It was but natural that Augustus should find it difficult to tear himself from her company.

"And, pray, how much longer are we to be denied the happiness of access to your house?" inquired Clarence Eardley, as he was lounging along the Prater, one mild afternoon, in company with Hamilton and Cadogan; the latter stiff, upright, dignified, in the heartfelt consciousness that not a fault was to be found with his horse, his coat, or his companions.

"Mrs. Hamilton is still too weak for society," replied Augustus.

"But she might surely spare us Mrs. Cadogan?" said Clarence, laughing. "The Archduke Francis inquired of me the other day what was become of her."

"Surely he might as well have asked the question of Cadogan," replied Hamilton, gruffly; his "gentlemanly" friend being too much engrossed by the passing carriages to prove a dangerous listener.

"Why expect an Imperial Highness to show so little tact?" inquired Eardley in a still lower voice. "He asked *me*, as your particular friend, after the wife of *your* particular friend. I can't conceive a more direct mode of inquiry!"

"Can't you?" muttered Hamilton, turning red with rage, yet not daring to give vent to feelings which might excite Cadogan's attention. "Since you have associated so much with those *précieuses ridicules*, the Miss Burtonfields, you have been as full of enigmas as the Lady's Repository. I do not pretend to understand you."

"No,—you are satisfied with pretending to forget the Miss Burtonshaws' name, which is, nevertheless, registered within your heart of hearts. Now, own the truth! Don't you pray to be delivered from the family, collectively and individually, every Sunday at chapel?"

"The Burtonshaws?" exclaimed Cadogan, readily catching the sound of a proper name. "Pray, my dear Eardley, tell us what induces you to frequent such people? Their dinners can be no inducement to *you*. Do you intend to marry any of them?"

"I should have no objection to marry the father. About Mrs. Burtonshaw and the girls I have my scruples. Burtonshaw is a sensible, well-informed man. His wife and daughters have a vulgar predilection for fine people, besides affectations of various kinds which render them as absurd as amusing. I would not barter my acquaintance with the Burtonshaws for that of the Lichtensteins, or any Durchslaucht in Vienna!"

"I scarcely think you will ever be asked to do so," observed Augustus Hamilton, with a sneer.

"I beg your pardon. You Exclusives, accomplished as you are, are terribly wanting in Social Economy. Such people as the Burtonshaws are rising in the market. Burtonshaw is a man of the new era; a practical, matter-of-fact individual, with plenty of money and plenty of intellect; the sort of human power-loom one would back to work wonders against a dawdling old spinning-jenny like Lord Tottenham."

Perceiving that it was Eardley's object to torment him, Hamilton was silent.

"We shall live to see Burtonshaw a great man!" continued Clarence. "And *then*, probably, he will become a bore; for, to *my* fancy, lords are as like each other as cauliflowers. Show me the difference between the great world of London, Paris, Vienna, or any other capital! Nay, if one had only shut one's eyes at the sooty court of King Christophe, and listened to its *babil*, one should probably have fancied oneself at Versailles!"

"If you, and your brother, and one or two more, who would sacrifice the best interests of the nation to a *bon-mot*, were aware of the real mischief you are doing by this sort of levity," observed Cadogan, sententiously, and settling his chin in his cravat, "you would be more prudent."

"You do me injustice! If I conceived the world weak enough to be injured by any nonsense of mine, I would have no mercy on it! One can't deal too rigorously with a thing that is feebly organised. For the good of mankind, every thing that wants reparation (even the constitution) should be mended at once."

"Provided we have confidence in the surveyor!" added Hamilton, scornfully.

"If good for any thing, he will not wait for sanction!" retorted Clarence.

"And, pray, do you look upon your friend Mr. Burtonshaw as worthy to be clerk of the works?"

"By no means; but he will do to carry his hod among the rest."

"You seem to have a very elevated opinion of him, considering how much time you devote to his society!"

"I frequent his house for pleasure, not for profit. After half a dozen centuries, the aristocracy of a country gets so smooth and round and polished, that one can scarcely discriminate one pebble from another. These Vienna people are all ditto, ditto, ditto repeated! Whereas, every new fragment tossed into the stream has a generic character of its own. The Burtonshaws, and their kind, exhibit all sorts of oddities and peculiarities. One never knows what they are going to say, or what they are going to do."

"Very embarrassing persons to be acquainted with,"

said Cadogan gravely, and taking off his hat as he passed the lumbering coach of a Bohemian grande-ess.

“ There!—A case in point!—From *you*, Cadogan, I was, of course, prepared to hear the very words you have uttered. Had I been talking to Burtonshaw about some eccentric individual of a lower sphere, it would have been out of the question for me to divine his reply;—perhaps a quotation from the Pondicherry Gazette,—perhaps some remark about the Bank Charter. He has a way of seeing things, which is neither of Grosvenor Square nor Arlington Street. His eyes and ears are his own; and have been wide open during the whole sixty years he has been living in the world.”

“ Absurd!” cried Hamilton. “ As if every set and circle had not its prejudices and ignorances ! ”

“ Ay! but the Papistry of a college of Cardinals is somewhat more influential than the Papistry of a synod of village priests. The opinions of their eminences, like their hats, are all cut out after the same pattern; the other poor rascals wear their minds and their threadbare garments ‘ with a difference.’ ”

Cadogan drew up into stiffer displeasure than before.

“ My brother Jack and myself, for instance,” resumed the reckless Eardley, disregarding him, “ have never lived together since we used to ride the same rocking-horse, twenty years ago, at Eardley House. *He* was at Harrow and Sandhurst;—*I*, at Eton and Oxford. *He* is a gay Colonel in the Guards, and makes ballads to the eyebrow (and a fine black eyebrow it is) of Lady Leighton;—*I* am a poor *attaché*, and offer up my humble prose to a millionaire’s daughter. *He* passes his life at Crockford’s, Almacks, Brighton,

Melton, Newmarket;—*I* have learned to smoke at Berlin, eat sterlet soup at Petersburg, make love at Paris, and have love made to me at Vienna. And yet, with all these discrepancies in our breeding, education, and habits, we are so perfectly alike in our ways of thinking and talking, that, when I correspond with Jack, I am never certain whether *I* do not write the answers to my own letters!—We are only two of a caste, and of ourselves—*nihil!*”

“ Two or three more of you would suffice to bring the caste *itself* to nothing,” muttered Hamilton.

“ What were you pleased to say, my dear fellow?” inquired the incorrigible Clarence. “ Or rather, what were you *displeased* enough to say; for you look as black as St. Stephen’s?”

“ I said, as I said before, that since the *bas bleu* Burtonshaws taught you to talk so like Monsieur Trissotin, there is no understanding you.”

“ Why, you understood me well enough just now, when I asked you why we never saw Mrs. Cadogan?” said Eardley, lowering his voice as he turned towards Augustus. “ You *must* have understood me, or you would not look so much as if you had swallowed a porcupine.”

“ There!” cried Hamilton, dreading what would come next;—“ There goes the Burtonshaw carriage, with its sky-blue and yellow liveries. Pray fly to your devotions!”

“ Why so severe upon sky-blue and yellow liveries?” said Eardley, taking off his hat as reverentially to Mrs. Burtonshaw as Cadogan had done to Princess Wrbno. “ One sees yellow and sky-blue liveries in the hall of Devonshire House. Stop!—I forestal what you are going to answer about the fitness of things!—It is precisely the beautiful incongruity of

Burtonshawism, that renders me its devoted adherent. And now, good bye!—Tell Mrs. Hamilton that if she do not admit me the next time I call on her, her character shall be torn to tatters, and the Burtonshaws will take care that the fragments reach England. The young ladies are wonderfully addicted to letter-writing; I forward half a bag full of scandal to Northamptonshire for them, by every courier."

"I have no doubt they neglect few opportunities of making themselves obnoxious!" ejaculated Hamilton; while Clarence Eardley rode off to laugh at him with his fair friends.

CHAP. XXIX.

If there be beings of higher grade than Man,
I deem no nobler province they possess
Than, by disposal of apt circumstance,
To rear up kingdoms: and the deeds they prompt
Distinguishing from mortal agency,
They choose their human Ministers from such states
As still the epic song half fears to name,
Repell'd from all the minstrelsies that strike
The palace roof, and soothe the monarch's pride.

COLERIDGE.

VERY different from the tenor of Susan Hamilton's life was that which awaited her sister. The most sanguine and strongly founded expectations of human happiness are rarely realised, so as to fill up the flowing outlines traced by a youthful fancy; yet Marcia was happier than she had expected! She possessed, not only the intelligent companion and noble-minded friend, to whose society she had aspired; but had soon means of observing that the circle of his professional

and literary friends, so far from meriting the stigma of “cold, solemn, and formal” assigned by the narrow experience of the coteries, was no less cheerful than intellectual. — Among the assemblage of distinguished men frequenting her new home, no one pretended to wisdom, because the *pretension* would have been ridiculous where the claim was so well established. — No one talked for conquest, as when two men of superior information find themselves matched against each other in an arena, in presence of a crowd of dunces. — In Bernard Forbes’s house, there was still a Republic of letters. Every citizen furnished his quota, without pomp or parsimony.

Nor was the laugh less cordial than she had heard in less erudite assemblies. There were jovial souls among them, capable of doing justice to that wild rebound of wit and humour, which seems to rise highest on removing the pressure of professional responsibility; and Sir Edward and his friend Claneustace, who dearly loved to desert the brilliant circles of the West end for the society of the Forbeses, seldom met with men of such easy yet distinguished manners, as those who were stigmatized by the Tottenhams and Hamiltons as the Hottentots of a kraal.

But it was not all this. — It was not even the satisfaction of noting the ascendancy gradually obtained by her husband over the somewhat intemperate character of her brother, which completed Marcia’s measure of happiness. It was, that the affection so long and blindly withheld from her, was lavished, at last, without limit or reservation. As if to atone for his mistake, the attachment of Forbes to his beautiful and gifted wife amounted almost to idolatry. — Her well-regulated temper, her generosity of mind, the probity of her character, her elevated view of human nature, her

reverence towards himself, were admirably calculated to enhance the charm of her beauty in his sight ; for he saw that, with so many attractions, and commanding admiration wherever she appeared, her vanity was vested in his fame ! — When he spoke, her whole attention was employed ; when he ceased speaking, her eye wandered furtively round the room to enjoy the sympathy of his auditors ; her cheek flushed with excitement, as when a pretty vain woman at once seeks and shrinks from the expression of public homage. She was careful, meanwhile, to take upon herself those household vexations insupportable to men of business or studious habits. Bernard Forbes's home served him only to be happy in.—He laid aside the anxieties of life upon its threshold.—There was no need to descend to the level of frivolous female companionship ; his wife was ambitious of elevating herself to the degree of confidence he chose to assign her.—Impossible to see a happier or better-assorted couple !

The consequences of this auspicious change in Forbes's destinies were soon apparent to the world. His temper, which had before exhibited the sourness of a disappointed man, was softened. The efforts of his public career were ennobled by the ambition of rendering himself worthy the esteem of which he was the object. It was admitted, even by his adversaries, that there was more vigour, more latent power, in his mind than they had presupposed. He had been thought a man of letters — they found him a man of intellect. He had been denounced as a theorist — they discovered that he was likely to prove too practical by half. He had been called a man of the day — they owned he was on the road to become the man of the century, the leader of the new era.

Renown is not born, like love, full-grown and tall.

The babe must be nursed into perfect growth; and rarely has human instinct enabled us to prognosticate from the boyhood of the aspiring urchin, that nobleness of manhood, that vastness of a great reputation, which, like

the towering mountain stands,
And casts its shadow into distant lands!

Pen. Smith was the only person who ventured to assert that *she* had always seen in Bernard Forbes the making of the greatest man in England. But even those who protested that, like all the rest of the illustrious, he owed a considerable portion of his eminence to his opportunities, were forced to acknowledge that he had made the most of them.

Amid all this public distinction and domestic happiness, one circumstance alone caused some little anxiety to Marcia. From the period of despatching to Vienna the letter intended to warn Mrs. Hamilton against an intimacy with Caroline Cadogan, she had received no intelligence of her sister, except through the medium of the newspaper which announced the birth of her son and heir. A few hasty lines from Augustus informed Lady Berkely, that the event had been accelerated by a severe attack of illness, but nothing further. The mother and sister had no means of relieving their anxiety. Sir Edward was off to Ireland for his Easter audit; and, had it not been for the intelligence brought by Lord Claneustace from Spring Gardens, they would have been driven to the disagreeable necessity of a correspondence with Mrs. Cadogan. But Claneustace, compassionating the distress of Mrs. Forbes, was careful to supply her with the earliest information, after every letter received by Lord Laxington from his son.

"I bring you good news," cried he, entering the Forbeses' drawing-room one evening at tea time,

" which I trust will excuse this untimely intrusion. The Hamiltons are on their return to England."

" On their return ? " cried Marcia, laying aside a paper from which she had been reading to her husband the report of one of his own fine speeches. " Susan too ill to write to me ; yet well enough to undertake so long a journey ? "

" It would be too much to expect consistency from the pupil of Augustus Hamilton," cried Forbes, not particularly pleased by an infringement of his evening privacy,— a period sacred to the domestic worship of the English. " Why should we suppose that a winter passed between the ante-chamber of Metternich and the saloons of an emperor, would improve his morals or his manners ? "

" Lord Laxington informs me," resumed the marquis, " that, some time ago, he issued his mandate of recall. And now, it seems, the Cadogans and themselves are actually on their journey homewards."

" *Together?* " inquired Forbes, with a contracting brow.

" *Together.*—They are *always* together—much to Lord Laxington's dissatisfaction."

" I wonder *he* should disapprove ! " observed Forbes morosely. " In *his* circle, such arrangements are common enough."

" How soon will they be here ? " inquired Marcia, eager to change the subject.

" They are expected in ten days."

" Just as we shall be gone to the Isle of Wight, for the holidays ! " said Mrs. Forbes to her husband. " How vexatious ! "

" I fancy, my dear Marcia, you will meet soon enough for your mutual satisfaction ! " observed Forbes, taking up the newspaper she had laid aside.

"Your sister will never forgive you for marrying me; and *I* shall never forgive Hamilton the part he has played, from first to last, with respect to Mrs. Cadogan."

"But Susan,—you forgive Susan—you admit poor Susan's blindness?"

"Susan and Hamilton are one. Her infatuation renders her the mere shadow of her husband."

"As a wife ought to be!" observed Mrs. Forbes, trying to convert his sober earnest into jest.

"A woman holding such an opinion should certainly be scrupulous in her choice!" said Claneustace drily. "I am no longer surprised that women are so fastidious."

"I sometimes wish," said Marcia, conscious that they had approached a delicate subject, "that Susan's happiness were less exclusively bound up in her husband."

"Every woman fancies her happiness so narrowly limited, till she is disenchanted," observed Lord Claneustace. "Fortunately, Mrs. Hamilton will wake from her dream to a very positive state of human enjoyment."

"She will have nothing to fulfil her own estimate of happiness," exclaimed Marcia, earnestly; "and I entreat you, as I have already entreated Bernard, to hazard no hint in her presence which might tend to her enlightenment. She was warned against the heartlessness of Augustus Hamilton, but it did not prevent her attachment. Apprise her of his treachery, and her heart would break at once!"

"Fear nothing!" replied Lord Claneustace. "I am well aware that husbands, like popes, are infallible. Not a word shall ever transpire on *my* part, likely to injure the happiness of your sister."

CHAP. XXX.

Salut ! mon nouveau-né, mon jeune, mon doux hôte !
 D'hier nous sommes deux ! — Le souffle de ta bouche
 Se mêle à chaque souffle étranger qui le touche !
 Et je pleure ! — Pardon — pardon, mon bien-venu.

DESBORDES-VALMORE.

FEW things are more calculated to confirm (or annihilate) a friendship between two families, than a journey on the Continent performed together. At Vienna, it appeared impossible to strengthen the intimacy between the Hamiltons and Cadogans ; but, before they reached Strasbourg, the chances of the road had thrown them together ten times more unreservedly than before.

The spring was breaking. The softness of the weather, so propitious to the infirm condition of her child, melted the heart of Susan into vague impulses of happiness and gratitude, such as render the return of spring a holiday, even to the wretched. And she, so young, so beautiful, so beloved, so prosperous, with her husband by her side and a living child in her arms, returning to a country endeared by the closest ties of kindred and friendship, could not sufficiently acknowledge the perfectness of her contentment. A prayer of praise rose unpremeditatedly to her lips. Tears gathered unwittingly in her eyes. She felt herself too much the favourite of fortune for the measure of her deserts !

Mrs. Hamilton had almost forgotten the turmoil of worldliness and dissipation which awaited her at the close of her journey. As she watched, with a delighted eye, the enfranchised and gladdening waters of the

Danube and Rhine and the tint of earliest green hovering over the forests, it did not occur to her that, for months to come, she was to be “cabin’d, cribb’d, confined” within the splendid prison of the modern Babylon. Spring Gardens, with its clamour of worldliness and bevy of powdered lacqueys, brought her back to matter of fact.

The impressions of her welcome home, meanwhile, were far from agreeable. Lord Laxington’s mortification and disgust at the sight of his sickly heir, were very slightly disguised; and he continued to dwell, with more pertinacity than kindness, on the singular beauty of the grandchild presented to him by Mrs. Tottenham. Susan’s heart swelled. But she was too happy in her boy to be easily discouraged. It appeared too, that Julia had been doing the honours of Lord Laxington’s house; and the brow of Augustus grew dark, as he listened to his father’s account of the brilliancy of his recent parties, and the tact and judgment of his daughter in all matters of fashionable hospitality. Susan was evidently out of favour. She had to answer for the malefactions of her brother in beguiling Lord Claneustace from his duty; and of her brother-in-law, in thrusting under the observation of parliament, night after night, the offences and oversights of the administration.—Every cheer extracted from the House by the oratory of Forbes, was heavily registered against her; and it became evident to Augustus that, unless his wife exerted herself to regain the ground she had lost, their chance of comfort in Spring Gardens was a poor one.

Lord Laxington’s grudge against the tribe of Berkely had been fed by Vardens’ and the Tottentons’ insinuations of how much more advantageously Augustus might have allied himself elsewhere; no

less than by a rumour that the coveted hand of Lady Ashley was about to be bestowed on Sir Edward Berkely! All this was made manifest to Susan by her husband, and the explanation was not calculated to raise her spirits; more particularly when, in the midst of Augustus's exhortation, Julia, in all her oppressive levity of spirits, made her appearance, eager to heighten the colours of the picture!

"Do you know," cried she, addressing her brother, after having frankly assured Susan that she must not set her heart on rearing her sickly babe, "my father is in a prodigious rage against you? He says, you have been spending a fortune at Vienna, only to make a fool of yourself and him; — that you have no turn for business, — that you are a dead weight upon his hands, — and a few more of those politenesses, which he used occasionally to bestow upon you before you were married.— What have you been doing to affront him?"

"Allow me rather to ask what Tottenham has been saying to my discredit?"

"William seldom takes the trouble of talking to my father: he swears it is as heavy work as addressing the Treasury bench. But I don't suppose that, if his lordship thought proper to accuse you, my husband considered it his duty to provoke him, by defending you."

"Of course not."

"My dear Gussy, you have no notion what pains we have been obliged to take to make ourselves agreeable! — As there was nobody at Weald this winter, William went to Melton and spent all his money; and we want my father to pay five hundred pounds for us, or get us some small sinecure to fill up the gap in our income."

"Tottenham has no more prudence than a child!"

"I fancy the people at the Treasury are rather

scrupulous about giving any thing away just now. For that wretch Forbes (begging Susan's pardon) hunts out every little job or snug piece of peculation, and shows it up without mercy ; and Claneustace, you know, is growing as great a radical as any of them."

"Don't talk to me about radicals," cried Hamilton ; "there is something poisonous in the very name!"

"I really believe I had better have married poor Clan.," cried Julia, laughing, "to secure his vote and interest for the party ; for my father has taken his defection terribly to heart. His presumed disposal of Claneustace gave him more power than we were aware of."

"With such a standing as my father's in his party ! Ridiculous !"

"The question is rather, what standing the party has in the country," said Julia, who stood in no awe of her brother's black looks.

"The party *is* the country !" cried Augustus. "The Whigs scarcely exist,—they are extinguished,—obsolete,—forgotten !—One never hears the name, unless in one of Lady Berkely's maudlin rhapsodies."

"You Vandals, who have been passing six months at Vienna, must not come here to silence us with the Metternich gag !" observed Julia. "Had you been in town this winter, you would see things in a different light. Lady Leighton declares that all who have their bread and butter to secure, had better lose no time :—that we shall all be reformed, displaced, and unpensioned, within twelve Kalendar months."

"Lady Leighton talks like a fool."

"You used to cite her as a very clever woman."

"Too clever by half!—Besides, she invariably sees things after the views of her last lover, whoever he may chance to be. While it was Eardley, she talked

like a *roué*. *Who* claims the honour of having made her a democrat?"

"Claneustace, I suppose. She wants him to marry her daughter."

"Marry her daughter!" exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton.
"Has Lady Leighton a daughter?"

"Blanche was presented at the last drawing-room."

"How very strange!—I never saw her at Lady Leighton's."

"To be sure not!—Her mother knew too much of the world not to keep the lid of the show-box as close as wax.—Nothing injures the success of a girl more than to be talked of before she is out. Blanche Leighton is a great beauty, and a charming girl: and her merits took every body by surprise."

"Even Lord Claneustace?"

"I don't believe he troubles himself about her. Claneustace is never seen in society. Sir Edward Berkely has drawn him completely out of the world. By the way, my dear Augustus, I hear strange accounts of your proceedings at Vienna. Clarence Eardley has been writing to his brother that —"

"Do not tell me," hastily interrupted Hamilton, "if it be any thing I ought not to hear. I am in no humour to put up with impertinence from either of the Eardleys."

"You are in a very *bad* humour. And here comes William,—most likely in a worse."

"Good morning, Mrs. Hamilton:—Hamilton, how are you?" said Tottenham, without moving a muscle of his inanimate countenance. "When did you arrive?" he added, after receiving the necessary reply to his civilities.

"Yesterday."

"Have you been to the Travellers'?"

"For half an hour, last night. I wonder I did not meet you?"

"I was at Crockford's."

"Any play?"

"Nothing to speak of. There was the Currency Bill, you know, in the House. But Baldock came in before the division, and lost eighteen hundred. Lancashire has lost every thing this season. His Herefordshire estate was sold to clear his accounts at the *Salon* before he left Paris; and they say Weald will go next."

"I wish Lord Laxington would purchase it!" said Susan.

"Lord Laxington *purchase* it?" ejaculated Tottenham, with the same unperturbed countenance, though amazed beyond description at her *naïveté*.

"*My* father buy an estate!" reiterated Augustus. "When you know that he has not a guinea in the world!"

Susan knew no such thing; but was careful to make no further exposure of her ignorance.

"If I were Lancashire," said Tottenham, "I would sell my borough. Next session it will not be worth five years' purchase."

"What damned nonsense!" cried Augustus, whose patience was never proof against allusions to the probability of political changes. "I suppose you have been conning your lesson out of Claneustace's famous speech?"

"It made noise enough, I can assure you. People look upon him as likely to make a prodigious figure."

"Prodigious indeed!"

"You may laugh,—*I* did at first. But the time is coming when he may chance to make us all look blue."

"The fact is," cried Julia, "that Claneustace is

doing all sorts of things unbecoming his rank in life. It is easy enough to be talked of, if a man choose to take the pains."

"And what is his line of eccentricity? — riding races? — driving the mail? —"

"What would there be unusual in all that? — No, no! — I mean that he goes over his estate like a surveyor, — projecting railroads, — laying down plans for new villages, — lowering his rents, — resigning his tithes as lay-impropriator; — and all the follies which men commit who hunt after popularity."

"But of what use would popularity (in the common acceptation of the word) be to Lord Claneustace?" interrupted Susan. "He has no election purposes to serve. If desirous of the esteem of the people, it must be from pure patriotism."

"Pure patriotism!" sneered William Tottenham, taking off the gold head of his cane, and smelling to the vinaigrette it contained. "The pure patriotism of a boy like Claneustace!"

"Pitt was a minister of state at the same age," said Susan.

"But did you ever hear of the immortal Billy running about the country making railroads on his estates?" cried Mr. Tottenham.

"He had no estates to benefit by them; — and railroads were not in existence," replied the matter-of-fact Susan.

"At all events, he might have been an utilitarian, if he liked; and he did *not* like!" replied Augustus, angrily. "As I have often observed to you, Susan, the less you talk politics the better."

"I was not talking politics," said Susan, mildly; "only attempting to vindicate Lord Claneustace."

"My dear Mrs. Hamilton," said Lord Laxington,

entering the room ; “ may I inquire whether you have made arrangements to be presented on Thursday, on your return from abroad ? ”

“ Indeed, I have not. I was unwilling to be absent from the child for so many hours.”

“ Let me beg, then, that you will begin your preparations immediately.”

“ Certainly, if you desire it.”

“ There is to be a dinner and ball in honour of the new French ambassadress, to which you will not be invited unless you have appeared at Court.”

“ I should rejoice to escape both,” observed Susan. “ But, since you wish me to go, I will order my dress immediately.”

“ Thank you, my dear, thank you ! ” cried his lordship, unused to such prompt obedience from his own children ; and taking a hundred pound note from his pocket-book, he placed it in Susan’s hands, observing, “ As I wish you to look particularly well on this occasion, I am bound to supply you with the means.”

“ Do you wish *me* to go to the drawing-room, papa ? ” inquired his daughter, in an insinuating tone.

“ Just as you and Mr. Tottenham please, my dear. It is immaterial whether you go or not. *Your* situation is very different from Mrs. Hamilton’s. Something is expected of the wife of my son.”

The accomplished William screwed back the top of his cane, with an indignant jerk.

“ Now I think of it, it will be better for me to go to the drawing-room,” observed Susan ; “ for Mrs. Cadogan wants to go, and I shall be able to present her.”

“ Present Mrs. Cadogan ! I beg you will not think of such a thing ! ” exclaimed Lord Laxington ; while Tottenham smiled significantly at his brother-in-law.

But Augustus did not recognise the signal. He had taken out a blotting-book, and was pretending to write a note.

"Unfortunately, I have *promised* her, in case I should go," said Susan.

"Then you must get off the engagement. It is out of the question. What claim has Mrs. Cadogan upon you, of any sort or kind?" cried her father-in-law.

"You have no idea, my dear Lord Laxington, how much I am indebted to her kind offices!"

"Yes! I *have*,—a very good idea!" said his lordship, glancing indignantly at his son.

"She attended me like a sister, during my illness. Did she *not*, Augustus?—Speak to your father!" cried Susan earnestly, going towards the table and leaning on her husband's shoulder. "It is not fair of you to remain silent when any slight is intended towards Mrs. Cadogan."

"Julia, my love!" exclaimed Tottenham, addressing his wife, without attempting to disguise his disposition to risibility, "pray take a lesson of Mrs. Hamilton!"

"In one word, Susan," cried Hamilton, rising and throwing down the writing-paper he held in his hand,—"My father does not *choose* you to present Mrs. Cadogan. It is totally unimportant. Cadogan's connections among the Roman Catholic nobility place him on ground far higher than our own."

"You will explain to your friends, therefore, that Mrs. Hamilton is compelled to decline the honour," said Lord Laxington, authoritatively, to his son, as he prepared to quit the room. "I should have thought you had more discretion than to propose any measure of the kind."

Julia began to laugh heartily when Lord Laxington

was gone. But she was soon stopped by the furious countenance of her brother.

“Tottenham, my dear fellow,” said he, in a voice which showed him to be in earnest, “I rely upon you to impress upon your wife’s mind that I admit of no interference in my affairs. The slightest recurrence to this subject, which apparently so much amuses her, and so long as I breathe I will never speak to her again!” —

“Indeed, you must forgive Augustus for being angry,” said Susan, trying to pacify her sister-in-law, as she prepared to quit the room. “It is entirely from regard to *me* that he has become Mrs. Cadogan’s champion!”

CHAP. XXXI.

And thou, too, whose life — a sick epicure’s dream.

MOORE.

THE Hamiltons had arrived in London, according to Marcia’s anticipations, just after her departure from town with her husband for a fortnight’s recreation. There was, therefore, leisure for Augustus to determine his future line of conduct towards the Forbeses, without deviating from the system of conciliation he had recently adopted towards his wife. — Plausible pretexts for the extension of this convenient armistice soon presented themselves.

The secret services executed by Hamilton at Vienna, happened to be of a nature to place his name under the immediate attention of the king. The Hamiltons were an old-established race of royal *protégés*. Lord Laxington was the godson of George the Third; and

Augustus had been, in his boyhood, a Brighton plaything of George the Fourth. His good address secured him, in later life, the favourable notice of “the most accomplished gentleman in Europe.” He had frequently been the guest of the king, both at the Pavilion, and at Carlton Palace ; and, on Mrs. Hamilton’s bridal presentation, His Majesty had expressed a desire to improve their acquaintance. On her return from Vienna, as handsome and more graceful than ever, this vague compliment was followed up by a specific command. They were invited to pass a few days at Windsor.

Poor Susan ! obliged to leave her child behind, and listen acquiescingly to her husband’s self-gratulations on this proof of royal approbation. Her only comfort was in Caroline’s more than friendly promise to instal the poor little creature in her own nursery during her absence. Nay, so completely were her feelings engrossed by maternal anxiety, that, even timid as she was, it never once occurred to her, as a matter of nervous apprehension, that she was about to become the inmate of the Louis Quatorze of modern times,—the Chesterfield of the throne,—the Alcibiades of the nineteenth century.

Her abstraction was strangely in her favour. The perfect serenity of her pre-occupied face, the tranquil gentleness of her movements, the soft tones of her feminine voice, captivated the fancy of one over whom every species of female fascination had been laboriously exercised. The Hamiltons made a favourable impression. A recent residence abroad had enriched the repertory of Augustus with a thousand diverting anecdotes of the illustrious of continental countries, (and who does not know the value of a new anecdote, to the satiated ears of royalty ?) while his lovely, quiet,

and unembarrassed wife evinced a degree of indifference to the triumph of pleasing which rendered her a safe and acceptable guest to those who saw the necessity of extending the royal circle, and the peril of extending it unreservedly. The visit of the Hamiltons was prolonged. They were invited again. The approval of the circle was confirmed; and, to the infinite delight of Lord Laxington, a place in the household was bestowed upon his son and a suite of apartments in the castle appropriated to his use. As Pen. Smith again and again ejaculated, "Every thing seemed to prosper with the Hamiltons!"

It would have moved the heart of any one having a heart to move (which was not the case with all the personages in Spring Gardens), to behold Susan, having escaped from the durance of royal favour, seclude herself in the silent, solitary chamber devoted to her miserable child; sitting there motionless, with the little helpless thing folded to her bosom, and displaying all that holiness of maternal affection which beatifies the countenance of the Madonna. She scarcely dared to address it in those stirring invocations of tenderness—half-speech—half-song, which burst from a mother's lips over her first-born, lest she should endanger its fragile existence. That the hour-glass must not be shaken, increased the value of the golden sands. Precarious as was its life, she must not neglect to profit by every murmur of its little breath, every change of its little countenance; that breath which sire and grandsire daily wished might be extinguished, and that countenance which Augustus, in her absence, reviled as the type of every human infirmity. The new appointment of her husband was chiefly gratifying to her, indeed, as affording an opportunity of purer air to the child. The letters she was now permitted to

address to her mother teemed with details of its progress in strength ; while she scarcely recollects to add that she had been exalted by the especial notice of the king, and that Augustus was now a courtier.

But though so indifferent to her rising favour at Windsor, her friends had as much to say of her prosperity, as Job's of the adversity of the patriarch. Her sister rejoiced in an arrangement which broke through her London connections ; her mother was as pompous as though the honour had been vouchsafed to herself. The borough of Laxington, too, was especially gratified by the Hamiltons' preferment. Vainly did the return of the Cadogans to Everleigh, at the close of the season, set the dinner-bell in motion, which had been wont to afford the *premier coup d'archet* of their festivities. Vainly was it rumoured that Lady Ashley was about to give her hand to a Sicilian Prince, or an ensign in the guards (report could not determine which). Nay, even the sickness, death, and burial of the vicar, were matters of secondary import to all but his apothecary, undertaker, and successor, by comparison with the fact that two members of the genteel neighbourhood had been dipping in the dish with an Emperor, and were now hobbing and nobbing with the king. Who could say what distinctions they might secure to the borough !— Perhaps a race-course, perhaps a national school, a new church, new theatre, or new charter !—

Nothing of all this militated against their allegiance to the House of Tottenham. The Earl was supposed to have suggested to the Hamiltons the eligibility of Weald Park as a residence and source of title ; so that the proprietors of the hogshead of muscavado, and blue and red bottles, were entitled to account the acquisition of Lord Laxington's family among the benefactions vouchsafed by the noble Earl to the

Edom over which he deigned to cast his shoe. While raising paeans in honour of Augustus Hamilton, drinking his health at the Tottenham Arms, and canonising him at the Vicarage tea-table, they were careful to thank Heaven and their noble patron for having granted them such a neighbour !

The wonderful wonder of Roman Catholic emancipation ceased to amaze them ; for it was whispered by Lady Berkely to Pen. Smith, and by Pen. Smith to half the county, that there was nothing strange in Lord Shetland's change of views on that thorny question ; her son-in-law Hamilton having presented to the prime minister Mr. Cadogan, of Everleigh Hall ; not only the best informed man in England on all matters connected with his church, but the most eloquent in their exposition : on which hint, the Laxingtonians confessed it would not surprise them if, at some future time, Lord Tottenham should be pleased to return so influential a man as one of the members for Laxington.

" Of course, it was not for *them* to dictate. They should not like it to be said, that they had taken the liberty of expressing a preference. Still, they owned, with due submission, many things would astonish them more than to see Mr. Cadogan, of Everleigh Hall, M. P. for Laxington."

Hamilton, meanwhile, who cared as little for the spiritual interests of his friends as for the temporal interests of Laxington, and who had presented Cadogan to Lord Shetland and Lord Shetland to Cadogan, one night at the Ancient Music, by way of mutual bestowal of the tediousness of both, regarded the advantages of his new position, solely with reference to his interests. He had not, however, been reared in the atmosphere of patronage, without attaining the

certainty that, of all pretensions, pretensions to preferment in a courtier should be most sedulously concealed. Wide as the book of history is opened to the investigation of Kings, the case is not so hopeless as might be supposed, when a man is audacious enough to assume that he sacrifices his time, his ease, his convenience, his natural connections, to a *disinterested* passion for his sovereign! Monarchs will always be found of a sufficiently credulous complexion to believe, that the select gang of white slaves who shut themselves up with them in their stately mausoleum of Windsor or the Escorial, despise, as heartily as *they* despise, the crosses, ribbons, and buttons with which the services of the venal throng are rewarded; that, as the confectioner's apprentice sickens at the sight of marmalade, a courtier loathes the very aspect of a coronet, and nauseates the candied perquisites of office! Nor are men of reputable family and distinguished education less abundant, who are not ashamed to play fantastic tricks and devote themselves to yachting, boating, farriery, or sealing-wax-making, according to the taste of the royal or imperial throne to which they bow the knee; though aware that, however imperceptible their meanness to the eye of the sovereign, it is only too clearly developed in the sight of each other and the world.

Bold as was Augustus Hamilton's braggartry of independence, he was too well aware of the uncertain tenure of his father's fortunes, not to have resolved to effect, at almost any sacrifice, a solid provision for himself. He would not, of course, do any thing contrary to the code of polite honour; nothing "ungentlemanly;" nothing calculated to get him black-balled at a club or stigmatised in the coteries. But, to perform the ko-tou of courtiership, in common with the

highest and mightiest, was easy to be palliated. To run the race of lying or equivocation with a duke, could impart no disgrace. To swear that the Virginia water (like the Tesinos of the ancients) was composed of one part water and three part fishes, was no reproach, except to the individual who believed it. To protest that Correggio's *Notte*, or Raphael's *Madonna della sedia*, were vapid in comparison with Rembrandt's lady with the fan, or Gerard Douw's woman peeling turnips, might be an error in judgment; and to prefer Lawrence the finical, to Vandyke the courtly, or Oginski's *Polonaise* to Beethoven's symphonies, might be a fault of taste. Augustus Hamilton professed himself an enthusiastic advocate of Moorish architecture; and could rave of the Alhambra and Generaliffe, in raptures which Xarifa might have flung her golden cushion down to hear. And, when he saw the ear of majesty gratified by his protestations that Athens, Pæstum, and Girgenti presented only granite skeletons of forms originally frightful, it was but natural that he should become indifferent to the sneer which marked the consciousness of the royal circle of his motives and their meanness.

Luxurious as he was, and skilled to appreciate the refinements of the board at which he fed, the music which soothed his idleness, the equipages which attended his orders, the exquisite completeness, in short, of all he saw, or touched, or tasted,—Augustus became insensible to his personal enjoyments, in order to secure the means of their perpetuation. Like Grammont, he affected to be rich, by way of attaching the benefactions of his royal master; and assumed the reckless tone of a man of pleasure, by way of entitling himself to trust as a man of business. A few retired courtiers of the old school, who were accustomed to demonstrate, once or

twice a year, that they had not altogether quitted their hold of one extremity of the golden chain, by appearing in the royal stand at Aseaot or gracing the royal table on a Birthday, were heard to whisper that young Hamilton would go further in placemanship than his father ; that, as every generation advances a step in life, the next Hamilton would be a sleeping instead of a working partner in the firm of the state ; that the minion of the modern Henri III. knew exactly where to aim the sweetmeats of his pop-gun !

In that little boudoir Court, formed upon the model of a French fairy-tale in which kings and queens arrayed in pearls and brocade inhabit bowers hung with jonquils, and dispense largesses of comfits and lap-dogs to their courtiers, Hamilton was the very man to rise ! He was as learned in “jewels, chains and owches,” as Cuvier or Haüy in their component gems ; as curious in goldsmith’s work, as a Heriot or a Medicis ; as exquisite in wines, as Lucullus ; as profound in sauces, as Vatel or Grimod de la Reynière. — The knick-knackery of life was at his finger’s ends. He had pointed out to Anastasius Hope the only spurious vase in his collection ; and detected for Lord Petersham a modern tail superadded to a silver dolphin in a group by Benvenuto Cellini ! He could spout virtù against Baldock, or Samuel Rogers ; and defy, in the cant of connoisseurship, the inimitable cognoscente of Sterne !

Say, dear reader ! *could* a man be better qualified to become Secretary of State ?

CHAP. XXXII.

It is a reverend thing to see an ancient castle or building not in decay, or a fair timber tree sound and perfect; — how much more to behold an ancient noble family, which hath stood against the waves and weathers of time? — New nobility is but the act of power; — ancient nobility of time. — BACON.

CLANEUSTACE Court was a fine old family seat, in the Marches of Wales; erected at a period when faction was a thing of pike and musketoon, rather than of back-stairs or ministerial majorities. The earlier Lords of Claneustace ranked among those turbulent Barons who — prompt to resent on the part of their sovereign the aggressions they inflicted on their vassals — bequeathed to their representatives those grand and memorable monuments of the feudal times, which ought to be sacredly preserved by posterity as grave-stones to the memory of departed despotism.

The site was nobly chosen. The castle stood on an eminence; at once a protection and rallying point to the surrounding country. The woods were fine. A navigable river imparted life to the landscape. The mansion itself, in perfect preservation, did honour to its inheritors. It was plain that there had been neither spendthrifts nor misers in the last three generations of the family. The estate abounded in timber of all ages; from the oaks which spoke of times when Evelyn was a farmer and Bess a queen, to the young plantations which had been made to fringe the woodlands, when, at the commencement of the present century, threats of invasion set all our dock-yards in motion; reminding the living generation that a few acorns are

no very onerous gratuity to devote to the security of their great-grandchildren.

The Lord Claneustace of that epoch happened to be a shy, reserved man, wholly disqualified to move in public life; who was of opinion that a wealthy nobleman, living his threescore years and ten blamelessly in the world, circulating certain annual revenues, rendering to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and receiving from John Dobbins the things that are John Dobbins's, fulfilled to the utmost his duties as a man and Christian. He appeared to consider that, since a nobleman is required to fill a great moral space in the world, it is no matter whether in latitude or longitude. No sooner, therefore, was he warned by his own sensations (and the assurance of two eminent physicians that nothing was the matter with him), that, at the age of five and thirty, he was about to fall a victim to a mortal disease, than his heart misgave him that he had mistaken himself; and, as there was no longer any hope of surviving to pay his taxes and receive his rents to the hoary age of seventy, so as to entitle him to be called by the newspapers "that venerable nobleman the Marquis of Claneustace," he began to fear that he might have deserved better of his country, and the Maker who had entrusted to his hand the disposal of so overweening a portion of its blessings, had he given up more of his time and thoughts to its service. He had been a good husband to his estates,—a good husband to his Marchioness. He began to apprehend that he had been a bad citizen!

His only hopes of retrieving his errors lay in the person of his infant son: whom his lordship resolved to place under the guardianship of some man of active character, likely to sprinkle a little pepper into his aristocratic porridge. Not a moment was to be lost.

His danger was imminent. Three-ravens of Warwick Lane were already croaking their promises of recovery by his bedside. He had only time to turn in his mind the public men of note and reputation on whom he could presume to entail such a charge; and, as Mr. Seeretary Hamilton had been his school-fellow and college-fellow, and was in circumstances to render the accompanying bequest of ten thousand pounds acceptable, it was to *him* the last will and testament of Richard, tenth Marquis of Claneustace, assigned the sole guardianship of the person and property of Henry the eleventh.

The task was, for some years, an easy one. The young Marquis seemed to inherit the placid and conformable character of his immediate sire, rather than the turbulent propensities of the forefathers who had taken Thomas à Becket by the beard, or stirred up the energies of Bosworth field. An orphan, before he had learned to recognize either of his parents, he attached himself strongly to the guardian who ministered so largely to his wishes, and so lightly to his correction; and, loving Lord Laxington as a parent, and Julia, first as a lively companion, and lastly as a very pretty girl, he had even managed to blind himself to the heartless egotism of Augustus. Admitting him to be a prodigal and a libertine, the young lord attributed to ardent and generous passions the faults which, in truth, proceeded from mere grovelling selfishness.

But Claneustace, like his father before him, was fated to be the slave of circumstances. Some characters, like certain minerals, remain soft during the process of formation, to harden at last into the sternest compactness. At eighteen, he had been the devoted lover of a pretty, silly, little girl, the only one with

whom the course of events had enabled him to ride in shady lanes, and rove in flowery shrubberies. At twenty, a goddess formed to

Ride on the whirlwind and direct the storm,

had smitten him with sudden enthusiasm ; and, had he been so unlucky as to marry Julia, he would have frittered into a dandy, — devoted himself to the sports of Newmarket, Cowes, and Melton ; Almack's, White's, and Carlton House ; or, had he obtained the hand of Marcia, he would have dwindled into a domestic machine, overpowered by the sense of her superiority. But an accidental encounter with his old schoolfellow Sir Edward Berkely at Rome, having thrown him, on his return to England, into the society of Bernard Forbes, instead of going on the turf, or dying of a prima donna in bravuratic pain, his enthusiasm was directed into the severer channel of polities.

As his lordship's understanding was now assuming the characteristics of maturity, this fortuitous collision was of vital importance. It made him ashamed of his deficiencies : and as he devoted his time to study, he became still more conscious of his ignorance ; and his humility being respected by those accustomed to tax his class with defects of a very different nature, he soon began to regret his father's providence in extending his minority ; and to long for the lapse of the remaining year that fettered his independence. He wished for the opportunity of proving to Lord Laxington that, however various their political opinions, he retained his affection for the person of his guardian ; and was no less desirous of proving to the world that he was a Reformer in practice as in theory.

Sir Edward Berkely, meanwhile, amazed by the precipitation with which his young friend had em-

barked in the vessel of the new æra, and the earnestness with which he was applying himself to the science of its navigation, was half tempted to regret that he had been the means of involving him in a party, opposed to the interests of his Order ; for, as a soldier and a soldier's son, he was attached to the principles of Lord Shetland, even while rendering an ample tribute of admiration to the patriotism and true-heartedness of Forbes and his confraternity. Recollecting his own former threat of selling Claneustace to the Opposition, he could not divest himself of a certain degree of consciousness, on observing that Claneustace Court, from which Lord Laxington pointedly absented himself, and from which the Leightons and their tribe were pointedly excluded, was filled with guests whose very names were as venom in the ear of government, as well as of that large portion of the community to which government supplies the organs of hearing.

On the eve of the meeting of parliament, Berkely and the Forbeses, who had been passing their holidays in a visit of investigation to the Irish estates of the former, paused there for a few days, on their return to town ; nor would any influence less harmonious than that of its noble scenery and picturesque aspect, have sufficed to soothe away the painful and irritating impressions imbibed by Bernard Forbes during his Hibernian tour. Unblinded by the great *coup d'état* which had induced the Tory party to crush, under the weight of the shield it chose to throw away, the Tarpeia who aspired to its bracelets of gold,—indignation against the oppressors was still hot in his heart ; and, having found in his brother-in-law Sir Edward, the usual views of an Irish landlord concerning Emancipation, it was no small gratification to

discover in the Marquis of Claneustace a degree of fervour equal to his own.

As they sat round the old baronial chimney one stormy night, with the wind roaring without, and the huge logs crackling on the hearth, Marcia had a difficult task in keeping the discussion of the state of Ireland within moderate bounds. Her husband could not speak with patience of the wretchedness he had recently witnessed.

"Though I have not a foot of land in Ireland," cried Claneustace, "I shall make it my duty to go over the ground *you* have gone over, and see, with my own eyes, the abuses *you* have seen. One ought to be on one's guard against the state of apathy into which one is apt to fall towards those sufferings of the poor, which it is so much easier to pronounce irremediable, than to attempt to remedy."

"Provided you do not adopt the vulgar error of fancying those sufferings can be cured in a day!" interposed Sir Edward.

"For my own part," resumed Forbes, "I confess that the demoralisation of a people, such as I have lately witnessed, degrades me in my own esteem;—not as the fellow-creature of men thus brutalised, but as the fellow-creature of those who have aided in reducing them to brutality. If, instead of bestowing civil liberty on foreign colonies, Canning, renouncing the prejudices of his early conservatism, had devoted his enlightened principles of legislation to a country where vice, disease, nay, even crime, have been rendered endemic by the short-sightedness of its misrulers, his name would have been immortal!"

"It is immortal," observed Sir Edward.

"No!—Posterity makes no supposititious grants of Fame. Canning is honoured in our own times, rather

for what he might have lived to do, than for what he really achieved. Experience of the extent of his powers, and of the power with which they had invested him, would have instructed him to fling aside the embroidered veil with which, like Mokanna of the East, he concealed the stern features of his real policy in order to gain proselytes to his standard. As it was, we saw the flower, and anticipated the fruit. The leaves fell and bequeathed us nothing but the remembrance of their beauty ; leaving Ireland to inscribe his name in the hopeless muster-roll of those who *should* have been her friends, but who, in the day of their glorification, forgot her claims."

"Ay, ay!" cried Sir Edward,—who made it a point of perversity to interrupt all political discussion between Forbes and Claneustace,—"we shall see your *own* enthusiasm cool, so soon as you are on the woolsack!"

"I doubt it!" cried Marcia, warmly.

"Right!" replied her husband. "Retain your full faith in my magnanimity ; and take up my defence, as earnestly as you choose. For I shall never be on the woolsack, to discountenance your assertions!"

"Do not assume a tone of mock humility!" cried Sir Edward. "I dare say, if the truth were known, your sleep is often disturbed by visions of the Seals and Mace borne before you."

"About as often as *you* fancy yourself invested with a marshal's truncheon," replied Forbes, laughing ; having by this time habituated his patience to the flippancy of his brother-in-law. "I shall *never* hold the seals ; because, *if* offered, scruples of conscience would forbid me to accept them."

"Of conscience?" demanded Claneustace.

"Of conscience!" reiterated Sir Edward at the same moment. "I thought such trash had become obsolete, with pig-tails and watch-chains!—Prythee, thy most exquisite reason?"

"Simply, that the duties of the Chancery Court are incompatible with those of the Speaker of the House of Lords. Ten, twenty, fifty, of my legal contemporaries would make a better Chancellor than myself; to any of whom I would resign the difficulties and profits of the office. But the parliamentary presidency, irreconcileable, in my opinion, with the calmness and sedateness indispensable to Chancery judgments, is not only within scope of my age and qualifications, but *ought* to be assigned to a man independent, as I am, of government patronage. My wife, I am certain, agrees with me, howbeit she prefer the honour and credit of her husband to all the pomp and precedence of human greatness."

"Pho, Pho!" cried Sir Edward. "Married scarcely a year, you are a dupe already! Marcia would sell your future monument in Westminster Abbey for a coronet on her tea-spoon!—Tell the truth — proud sister of mine,—would you *not*?"

"Do not answer him, Mrs. Forbes!" exclaimed Lord Claneustace. "He wants to keep himself warm, this Christmas night, by putting us all into a passion. Do not answer him."

"Don't, child, don't!" cried her brother. "I seldom believe more than a word in a million, uttered by a woman. Not one of you speaks truth, but Lady Leighton; who does not know what she says, and says the very thing she does not mean."

"I could give you good proof of my want of ambition, if I chose to mortify you by my discreditation," observed Marcia, smiling.

"Pray do!" exclaimed Claneustace. "I should like to see him silenced."

"But, in convicting *him*, I must admit Forbes into my confidence, which may not be altogether prudent."

"As if all secrets were not in common, between right-thinking couples!" cried Sir Edward.

"I keep none from Bernard," replied Mrs. Forbes, "which I consider worthy his participation. The one contained in this letter," she continued, taking a paper from the work-box she was using, "shall be made public, if *he* think it desirable."

"Public—public by all means!" vociferated Sir Edward, observing that the letter was in Mr. Hamilton's handwriting. "Let us hear news from the castle of castles!"

And having received the letter with an air of surprise, and glanced over its contents, Bernard Forbes read aloud as follows.—

CHAP. XXXIII.

By being seldom seen, he could not stir,
But, like a comet, he was wonder'd at.—
His presence, like a robe pontifical,
Seen but with awe.

SHAKSPEARE.

"Windsor, Dec. 11th, 1829.

"You will be glad to hear, dearest Marcia, that we are going on well here, and that little Clement improves hourly in strength and beauty. There never was a more lovely or engaging little creature."

"Poor Susan!—pass over all that!" said her sister, compassionately.

"And now, dearest," proceeded the letter, "I have something to communicate, which I am persuaded will give you pleasure. I have already told you with what very great graciousness, or I might say, kindness, Augustus and myself have been treated by the King. Though my husband's appointment is one which does not necessitate residence at the palace, his majesty has been induced to assign us permanent apartments here, solely by his preference for the society and manners of Augustus. No one is a more exquisite judge of high-breeding than his majesty; and, as you have probably heard, he often cites William Lock as the handsomest, and Augustus Hamilton as the most polished young man of the day."

"Poor Susan! pass over all *that!*!" said her brother, compassionately.

"The other night," continued the letter, "there was a little concert here, in honour of Lady R.'s birthday. We had De Begnis, Blasis, and Donzelli, down from town; and nothing could be better arranged. In the course of the evening, the King, after sitting for some time near the piano, came and placed himself beside me, and remained there for half an hour. You may guess whether Augustus was pleased! For my part, I own I am gratified by even the slightest proof of his condescension. There is something in the suavity of the King's manner, and the modulation of his voice (a well modulated voice is so very prepossessing!) which makes me feel pleased and gratified in his presence. On this occasion, I was *more* than gratified; for he began to talk to me of my father. You would have been surprised how accurately he was informed of the exact nature of my father's services,—the manner of his death,—and what ample justice he rendered to his merits."

"The mere craft of kingship!" exclaimed Lord Claneustace. "Every sovereign is crammed by a secretary, or privy purse, or chamberlain, or some other jack-in-office, previous to a levee or fête. I have no doubt it was a got-up scene."

"*I have!*" said Sir Edward, proudly. "Sir Clement Berkely's gallantry and merits were intitled to reach even a royal ear, and be registered in a royal memory."

"After talking some time of my father and inquiring after my mother, (whom he remembers in 1810 at Brighton,) his majesty suddenly inquired, ' You have a brother and sister, Mrs. Hamilton? — I think I have understood that Mr. Forbes, whom I regret to rank among the opposers of government, is married to a sister of yours? — A very beautiful woman, I am told: but who has not yet afforded me an opportunity of judging of her likeness to yourself.— This is not as it should be! The daughters of Sir Clement Berkely must not become strangers at court; and I trust you will do me the favour to bring over Mr. Forbes to my opinion !' After this, my dear Marcia, you will admit the impossibility of absenting yourself from the drawing-room; nor should I be surprised, if this almost accidental circumstance should be the means of procuring for Mr. Forbes the highest advancement in his profession."

Bernard uttered an unintelligible growl.

"Poor Susan! you musn't be affronted with her!" cried Sir Edward. "She offered her father's son Lord Laxington's protection to procure an ensigncy in the Guards!"

"I trust, therefore," resumed Forbes from the letter, "you will allow me to present you early in the season: for, as the King himself observes, it would be absurd,

indeed, if Bernard's politics were to throw you out of society."

"And what have you answered to all this?" cried Sir Edward, addressing his sister.

"Nothing! the usual policy of my sex. I wished to take a week's consideration of the matter before I even mentioned it to Bernard."

"And may I ask the result of your cogitations?" inquired Lord Claneustace.

"To neglect such an invitation," replied Marcia, "would, I conclude, be esteemed a disrespect towards the King; and, should the present administration be dissolved, I confess it would mortify me extremely, if Bernard were to be debarred from the professional honours so much his due."

"Are you such a dunce as to fancy that the King interferes with the details of a new ministry, like a squire's wife hiring a new household?" cried Sir Edward.

But Marcia did not listen to him. She was watching the gathering of a storm in the face of her husband.

"Do you refer the matter to my judgment?" inquired Forbes, interpreting her look.

"Wholly."

"Be assured, then, that neither the inducements of interest, nor any other, should ever prevail upon me to precipitate my wife into such an abyss of corruption as that which forms the paradise of Augustus Hamilton; nor to unclose *my* humble doors to the contamination of the society in which he lives, and moves, and has his being. From the time of the Castlemaines and Montespans, never has there existed in Europe a court so contemptible as that whose only extenuation

lies in the plea that its mysteries, like those of the Bona Dea, are performed in the shade."

"Nay, now you exaggerate!" cried Marcia. "Let me so far do justice to my sister as to declare, that not even her husband's authority would induce Susan to remain in a spot defiled by immorality. The King may prefer the domestic seclusion which constitutes the peculiar refinement of English life; or even indulge the weakness of not wishing to parade the defeaturements of age in the eyes of the nation, which so idolised the graces of his youth. But it is unfair to reprobate the country-house which happens to have a royal guard at its gates, more than any other, where frivolous amusements prevail, or where the arts (the learning of the great) are cultivated to the exclusion of more serious studies."

"Hear, hear, hear!" cried Sir Edward.

"I have too much reliance on your candour, my dear Marcia," observed Forbes, "not to attribute these statements to ignorance,—an ignorance which I revere and love. May you never become enlightened! May you never learn, as I have learned, to what a degree the orgies of Carlton House, and the feeble libertinism of the royal cottage, have contaminated the morals of the English aristocracy. That which we palliate under the name of fashion,—*what* is it but the combination of every vice,—of every meanness;—of sensuality,—of prodigality,—of hollow and heartless ostentation! No, my dear wife! Let us exclude from our blameless fire-side the pestiferous vapours of such a region. Let us close our doors,—our windows,—our *souls*, against every wind that blows from the infected purlieus of the Court. There exists a taint in its remotest breath,—a taint which, though imperceptible to the senses, operates on the moral nature,

till all is rotten ! I could not take you back with undiminished confidence into my arms, after knowing you to have been exposed to the fatal influence of such an atmosphere."

"Believe me, your prejudices are most unfounded!" said Claneustace, mildly. "Far be it from me to honour, as blameless, the manners of the times. But, surely, the degeneracy you reprobate is to be found in *every* order of society? — *most* flagrant, of course, in those circles where rank and opulence build up a stage of marble and gold on which to exhibit their follies; and most inexcusable, where education and enlightenment should induce to nobler pursuits. But it would be easy, in vindication of my Order, to point out, amid its ranks, some of the happiest households, the most conscientious men, the most virtuous women, to be found in any class of life."

"Can you point out *one*, from whose gates the impure and spotted are, without compromise, excluded?" cried Forbes. "Can you point out *one*, where no weak deference to the false laws of society, no truckling to personal interests,—no pitiful duplicity of pretended blindness,—tends to confound the corrupt with the incorrupt?—where you are never told that, so long as there is no *proof* against the guilty, he has a claim to the impunity of innocence;—that, so long as a scoundrel of distinction sanctions the infamy of his wife, by retaining her under his roof, nobody has a right to exclude her;—that, so long as a swindler of fashion retains the sanction of the clubs which want courage to eject him, he is at liberty to play the 'fine, gay, bold-faced villain' in every house in the metropolis? No, my dear Claneustace!—*Not one!* Name them to me severally,—the freest from reproach, the most select in their associations; and I will point out

in the circles of each, women who ought to be on the treadmill, and men at the hulks ! ”;

“ Order in the Court ! ” cried Sir Edward Berkely. “ Why, my dear Forbes, you are in a state of frightful effervescence to-night ! ”

“ *I am !* ” he replied, “ for, for the first time, I behold the fatal miasma creeping, with unwholesome breath, towards my happy home ! ”

“ Be satisfied ! ” said Marcia, firmly. “ After what you have said, not even the *command* of the King should induce me to oppose your scruples.”

“ But, my dear Forbes,” remonstrated Lord Claneustace, “ at some future time, your professional honours may render it indispensable for your wife to appear at Court ! ”

“ I suspect *not !* ” said Forbes, trying to recover his self-possession. “ You are well aware that it is only under a system of Reform, a man of my principles would be permitted to aspire to such distinctions; and before *I* become a law-lord, the spun-sugar fabric of the present Court must have melted away. Of what material the next may be composed, depends on fortuitous circumstances ; but, should it prove a temple of granite, severe and solid — ”

“ Horrible ! ” interrupted the gay soldier. “ A quaker’s meeting in St. George’s Hall ! A Congress of men in buckram in the Jerusalem Chamber ! What would become of my epaulets ! Such fellows as *you* would be for turning the Household Brigade into a National Guard ! Claneustace, my dear fellow,—pray return me, at the next dissolution, for one of your boroughs, that I may say something in defence of my gold lace ! ”—

“ *My* boroughs will, for the future, return whom they please ! ” replied the Marquis.

"Absurd! Why they will of course please to be represented by your own attorney, who will buy up their votes with your own money."

"Do you suppose that Laxington, if emancipated from Lord Tottenham, would return Jacob Smith?" inquired Forbes, with a smile.

"And pray, to what limits," demanded Sir Edward, evading a reply, "do you purpose to extend the Cordon Sanitaire which is to secure your wife from polite contamination? *I* go to the levee. Will you admit *me*? — Claneustace will go, I trust, to the royal balls. Shall you continue to admit *him*!" —

"I will admit neither of you," replied Forbes, gravely, but without displeasure, "if I find you disposed to cavil at my motives and misapprehend my conduct."

"You are secure from misinterpretation, on *my* part," observed Lord Claneustace. "Let a man's prejudices be what they may, when originating in tenderness of conscience, they are respectable and to be respected."

CHAP. XXXIV.

Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing; — his reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff.— SHAKSPEARE.

MEANWHILE, the newspapers, which in England afford to the busy multitude so circumstantial a diary of the proceedings of the idle great, were active in acquainting the world, "that the young Marquis of Claneustace, who was within a year of attaining his majority, was furnishing his Baronial castle in Cheshire in a

style of unique magnificence." He could not purchase a bronze lamp, but it was gazetted ; he could not order a carpet for his library, but all England was astounded by the pattern. While in Italy, he had despatched home specimens of sculpture by its modern masters, to perfect the fine gallery of antiques already existing at Claneustace Court. Several English artists were extensively employed for him ; and it was predicted, much to the satisfaction of the world in general, that if the Marquis had degenerated from the politics of his antecedent Marquesses, he had also resigned the kennel and the racing stable,—*their temples of glory*, — for the cultivation of the Arts and the promotion of universal knowledge. He was a liberal subscriber to public works, to useful and charitable institutions. But, to his disgrace be it spoken,—he had no hunting-box at Melton, no yacht at Cowes, no lodging at Newmarket, no manor on the Moors. He was satisfied with the shooting on his own estates ; and to use his horses as a mode of conveyance from one place to another, without aspiring to become the rival of his game-keeper, his coachman, or his groom !

All this was enough to reconcile the pretty Julia to having declined his hand and Marquise. Life would not have been worth having, if occupied by the rational and philanthropical projects to which Claneustace was devoting his attention ; and, though it seemed impossible that, for a continuance, he should prefer his attendance in parliament to the opera, there would have been little glory and less satisfaction in Marchionesship, as the wife of a man thus elevated above the pleasant fooleries of life. Her own mode of existence was infinitely more brilliant. William, per force of doing nothing with diligence and assiduity, had got a better place. Her presidency over her father's house, during

the frequent absence of Augustus at Windsor, gave her considerable credit in the eye of the world. She stood well with society ; — played an able game, both at the whist-table and with the hand of Court Cards dealt to her in the long-rubber of human life ; — and was established as, if not a beauty and a wit, at least as one of the prettiest women and most amusing agreeabilities of the circle of the Marquis of Shetland.

But to fulfil the vocation of Mrs. Tottenham, it needed to have received the education of Mrs. Tottenham. It required long training in the school of worldliness to have acquired the art of loving nothing, and of nothing desiring to be loved ; — the habit of never laying aside her secret mail-coat of egotism, either in the arms of her father, or at the footstool of her Maker. She had nothing to ask of Heaven, but worldly prosperity ; — she had nothing to desire for her parent, but that he might continue in office. In William Tottenham, she fancied she had found a kindred spirit. But when disabused from her error that two egotists are capable of blending their egotism into one, by the discovery that she had got a very disagreeable, and, in every sense, *indifferent* husband, she was too well versed in the ways of the world to imagine that her condition would be mended by grumbling, or her beauty, by despondency.

She determined, therefore, to be as happy as she had intended, but in a different way ; — consoled herself (as many have been consoled) with cards ; — with party-going and giving ; — with rendering her home, her fashions, her manners, her associations, the admiration of her favourite circle. Instead of being jealous of the distinctions achieved by her brother and his wife, she was pleased by the additional honour thus conferred upon the family : and satisfied herself with

laughing at Susan for her humdrum prejudices, and imploring Augustus, if he should ever become Lord Steward of the Household, or a lord of the Treasury, “in the sweet pangs of office, to remember *her*” and William; for alas! they had not yet got three thousand a year!

To avoid giving offence to a brother so influential, she studiously complied with his injunctions to forbear all reference to his connection with the Cadogans. But, though Susan preserved a similar discretion towards herself, Mrs. Tottenham had not sufficient ingenuousness to ascribe her sister-in-law’s conduct to the artlessness in which it really originated. The worldly wisdom of Julia attributed all, either to the indifference of a woman who has made up her mind and patience to an irremediable misfortune; or to her terror of the violence of her husband.

“I am too much afraid of Augustus to breathe a syllable on the subject,” said Mrs. Tottenham, one night, when discussing the subject with Lady Leighton and her set; “and his wife is not more courageous.”

“You are under a mistake, my dear,” rejoined Lady Leighton, more discerning than most of her associates. “That young woman, if capable of so much fortitude, is incapable of so much meanness. If she entertained the slightest notion of her husband’s attachment to Mrs. Cadogan, she might refrain, indeed, from confiding her sorrows to any human being. But *nothing* would induce her to remain on terms of friendship and affection with the offender.”

“Pho, pho, pho!” cried Colonel Eardley. “You women are too fond of establishing saints and martyrs in your own sex! Mrs. Hamilton is behaving like a very wise woman, and I applaud her policy.”

"She is behaving like a very innocent one, and I applaud her virtue!" said Lady Leighton strenuously.

"Indeed, I sometimes fancy she knows nothing of the matter," added Julia.

"Impossible!" cried Eardley. "My brother wrote me word, from Vienna, that the intimacy was as public as between the Emperor and Empress."

"There is a wide space between a Clarence Eardley's view of men and things, and that of a Mrs. Hamilton," replied Lady Leighton.

"At Vienna, Susan was too ill to hear or see anything but that wretched child of hers!" said Mrs. Tottenham, compassionately.

"In London, then,—in Northamptonshire,—wherever you will,—do you suppose it within the limits of human unsophistication, for Mrs. Hamilton to remain blind to her husband's devotion to Mrs. Cadogan?"

"You mean Mrs. Cadogan's devotion to *him*. Let me do my brother the justice to say that I never saw him devoted, for more than four-and-twenty hours, to any woman breathing."

"Well then, to Mrs. Cadogan's to *him*?"

"Certainly!" cried Lady Leighton. "I will defy interpreters, far more skilful than Mrs. Hamilton, to make mischief out of that woman's demure face!"

"She certainly deceives her husband," observed Julia.

"Easy enough. Cadogan being so great a person in his own conceit, self shuts out his view of other people. He stands in his own light. Cadogan fancies Augustus Hamilton's attentions addressed to Caroline, simply as to the wife of the most gentlemanly man of his acquaintance."

"But if we admit *his* blindness (though a shrewd

man enough in his way), why doubt that of Susan, who is as pure and simple as a cowslip?"

"The whole business was so self-evident!—Hamilton making love to Miss Berkely, one fine Autumn, because, being absent from the lady of his thoughts, *her's* was the prettiest face he happened to see. Then, flying off to Brighton, to the feet of Mrs. Cadogan, and following her back into Northamptonshire; till at last, on the eve of a discovery which would have turned him out of Everleigh and sent Mrs. Cadogan to Coventry (where it would not have suited him to travel after her), he makes a scape-goat of Miss Berkely, and Miss Berkely jumps at the offer of his hand. Any thing for a good match!"

"Your story is glibly and plausibly told," observed Lady Leighton, coolly; "but it scarcely contains a word of truth."

"Now then for a judgment in equity!" cried the colonel.

"In placing yourself in Miss Berkely's situation, you place yourself there endowed with all the worldly penetration of Lieut.-Colonel Eardley. You fancy that, because you, so cunning in sleight of hand, detected the juggler's art in dropping the sand out of his sleeve, *she* was not to be deceived by the trick. The Berkelys were living out of the world. Even *in* the world, the flirtation between Hamilton and Mrs. Cadogan had not been, at that time, talked of. Susan married him because she loved him, nothing dreaming that a passion for another woman held a lingering hold upon his heart; while *he* made his proposals only lest the world should say he had been acting in a manner unbecoming a man of honour."

"I have nothing to say in defence of Augustus," observed Mrs. Tottenham, yawning, "except that

Mrs. Cadogan's influence was too strong to be broken. At the period of his marriage, he would probably have been glad enough to hear no more of her."

"She is certainly a fascinating woman," said Eardley. "Mrs. Cadogan possesses that peculiar art of making herself an agreeable and *untroublesome* companion, which one would fancy the Evil one reserved as a dowry for his favourite daughters; for I hardly ever saw a woman endowed with it who was good for any thing else."

"Because irreproachable women do not stoop to toady a man into good humour!" said Lady Leighton, haughtily.

"Mrs. Cadogan's graciousness is far from servile," persisted Eardley. "But she is never in the way, never nervous, never fine, never fanciful. Think how disagreeable she might have rendered herself to Hamilton! But instead of growing hateful, as an old love is sure to become by comparison with a new wife, she kept out of the way till satisfied that the dissimilarity of character between Mrs. Hamilton and Augustus had wearied out his patience: and then —"

"Not another word!" cried Lady Leighton. "Here comes Blanche! And Heaven forbid that my daughter should learn, one hour before her time, the hollowness and heartlessness of those among whom she is destined to live."

"You must marry her to Claneustace!" said Eardley, sneeringly, "and they can live together, amongst the fields and forests, in the odour of sanctity."

"Ah! do not talk of such a thing!" said Lady Leighton, in an altered tone. "So great a blessing can scarcely be reserved for a child of mine."

CHAP. XXXV.

I desire that this may not be looked upon as a full and finished character, written for the sake of writing it; but as my deposit of the truth, to the best of my knowledge.—**LORD CHESTERFIELD.**

BLANCHE LEIGHTON was a lovely girl;—fair, gay, unpresuming, virtuous-minded;—brought up in the nursery and the school-room, without contact with the dissolute society frequenting her father's house;—loving her mother with the utmost tenderness, and looking forward confidently to a bright and happy life. She was the type of a well-educated English girl of high degree; pure in her complexion — purer in her mind.

Accustomed, from her earliest years, to know that her mother was amusing herself with such and such diversions, and to anticipate the time when she should share them in her turn, Blanche was sometimes puzzled to guess why Lady Leighton should so cautiously bar her from entering certain circles, and preside so vigilantly over her intercourse with divers friends of her own.

But Lady Leighton, if a woman of indifferent reputation, was a woman of sterling affections. Born in the enervating climate of the East, her mind was strong, but her temper wilful, and temperament weak. At an early age, her beauty had attracted the attention of a man who had little leisure to spare from the weighty studies of the law; and, as she was poor and an orphan, (the orphan of a man who had been too idle to lay by any thing out of the proceeds of a fine appointment,) she had nothing to do but marry him.

Mr. Leighton, however, was not a Bernard Forbes. *His* professional prospects promised, at best, an icy mediocrity. Nor had they been married many years, before his wife discovered that she must exert herself, either by working for her young family, or pushing her husband up the slippery hill of preferment. Inert as she was, the latter task appeared the least to be dreaded ; and soon, by the aid of a fine person, striking tone of conversation, and lively manners, she made herself acceptable to a higher, nay, to the highest, grade of society. The obscure lawyer became an active member, a placeman,—a Sir Joseph : while Lady Leighton lost nothing by his gains,—but her reputation.

She lost it unjustly. All she had sacrificed to the elevation of her family was the approbation of society ; which is apt to conclude that persons doing over well in the world, have attained their preferment by doing ill. The snarlers had not discrimination to discover that, had Lady Leighton *really* sacrificed her honour, she would have taken better care of her character.

“ These people abuse me,” was her own *r  sum  * of the subject, “ because Lord Shetland and George Hamilton happen to like my society. But since they have said their worst without a cause, let them say on, and welcome.”

Thenceforward, she began to laugh and flirt with the handsome Colonel Eardley, as readily as the Marquis and right hon. secretary laughed and flirted with *her*. Her house became one of the pleasantest in town. Sir Joseph was now opulent ; and the Regent, like Napoleon, loved to see his courtiers do justice to the wealth he dispensed. The rich furniture of the Leightons, their handsome equipage, their princely fare, their music, flowers, and lavish hospitality, were

attributed, therefore, to the tact of her ladyship's ambition. They were, on the contrary, the evidence of her predilections.

There was, however, a touch of high-mindedness even in her luxurious tastes. She had a soul above the element she lived in ; and despised, not only the great world, but herself for being its slave. From this recoil of feeling, arose the harsh and often unfeminine severity of her satire. Aware that the world thought her infamous, she was indifferent that it should think her disagreeable ; and, while her saloons were so fragrant, so brilliant, so refined, her feasts so well imagined, and her looks so lovely, her asperity of speech was calculated to drive the whole world from her gates ! It moved not an inch, however. Lady Leighton was the fashion ; her husband a great man ; her imputed lover, a fine gentleman. She sometimes laughed with both over the ridiculous construction placed by the gossips upon her conduct ; and was careful to flirt most with Colonel Eardley, when people were present who were likely to be scandalised by her proceedings.

It was strange that Lady Leighton, who possessed a warm heart and powerful head, though without much principle for the regulation of either, should have fancied she discovered sympathy of character in the levity of speech and action of Julia. Nor was it till Blanche grew up to become an auditress of their conversation, that her ladyship discerned in Mrs. Tottenham that want of sense and feeling, which were barely compensated by good humour. She had, hitherto, fancied, too, that Eardley, who was so pleasant a companion, was a dissipated, rather than a corrupt man. But no sooner was Miss Leighton old enough to be struck by the piquancy of his wit, than she found

it possessed the true Mephistophelian twang, the Borachio flavour of sin! — The difficulty of slackening her intimacy afforded her many an anxious hour; and she began to fear that Lord Claneustace, her friend and protégé, of whom, for two years past, she had dreamed as a most desirable husband for her daughter, would be driven from her society by the presence of his former love and preceptor in folly.

She was even desirous of modifying the character of her circle and the splendour of her establishment. But her extravagance having considerably embarrassed her husband's affairs, retrenchment might lead to suspicion on the part of those whom it was necessary to satisfy that all was well. Moreover, Sir Joseph was one of those fussy men who insisted on having dots placed on the *is* of life, and crosses to its *ts*; and, doating upon explanations, both in parliament and out, would be sure to apply to her ladyship's friends, Colonel Eardley and Mrs. Tottenham, for an insight into the motives of her inconsistency. All she could do, therefore, was to leave the poison cup of pleasure as sparingly as possible within reach of her child.

The absence of the Hamiltons at Windsor having deprived her, meanwhile, of a medium of connection with Claneustace, she suddenly resolved to make a pilgrimage of politeness through the desarts of the *Pays Latin*, once her natural sphere; to renew her acquaintance with his lordship's favourite associates, the Forbeses. Unprepared for the event, Marcia had, of course, taken no measures for the exclusion of a person specifically prohibited by her husband. She rendered her welcome as cold as possible, to secure herself from a repetition of the annoyance. But Lady Leighton was a difficult person to intimidate.

“I was anxious, my dear Mrs. Forbes,” cried her

ladyship, "to inquire after your sister. She has been so occupied in nursing since her return from Vienna, that one hears nothing of her now."

"Surely," observed Mrs. Forbes, "the Court Circular takes care that my sister's friends shall undergo no uneasiness on her account?"

"*You* fancy so, because you hear from her constantly. We, who have no other means of judging of her welfare, want to be told how her child and her *liaison* with Mrs. Cadogan are going on."

"Mrs. Cadogan is at Everleigh, with her husband, my sister at Windsor, with *hers*. The child is still alive, which is enough for Susan's happiness—and her misfortune."

"Yes! I heard from your friend Mrs. Tottenham, that it was alive; but—"

"Mrs. Tottenham was never my friend. Since my marriage, I have not even seen her."

"Which she very much laments. But tell me, my dear Mrs. Forbes, do you never intend to emerge from this dismal quarter of the town?"

"It is the quarter inhabited by most persons of my husband's profession,—by *all* who make it their profession in earnest."

"Who knows it, alas! better than myself! For four years after I married, I resided in Bedford Square. You, my dear Blanche, were born there! And not a creature worth speaking to, could I ever persuade into my house!"

"The creatures I consider best worth *hearing speak*, reside chiefly in this neighbourhood," replied Marcia, coolly. "Mr. Forbes's professional and parliamentary duties would prevent my consorting with those whose hours are so different from our own as the Hamiltons and Tottenhams."

"I forgot that Mr. Forbes had constituted himself

one of the pack-horses of the house!" said Lady Leighton, getting angry, and diverging into her usual vein. "Sir Joseph Leighton's professional and parliamentary duties do not prevent *me* from enjoying an opera, or taking my daughter to a ball."

"*I* have no daughter to take," observed Marcia, turning with interest towards the fair girl thus alluded to; whose countenance pleaded strongly in her favour, howbeit the daughter of Lady Leighton.

"But *do* not add, that you cannot enjoy an opera!" said Blanche, in a timid voice, replying to the inquiring gaze of Mrs. Forbes. "Surely, you appreciate Pasta?"

"You will blush for me when I own that I have never heard her!" replied Marcia, pleased with the gentle manners of her young visitor. "I was brought up in the country; and have married into a situation of life which forbids much participation in public amusements."

"But you enjoy music?" persisted Blanche, glancing at a harp and piano, and profusion of music books.

"Exceedingly — as serving to lighten many a solitary hour. But professional music I seldom hear. In every position of society, one is obliged to sacrifice something."

"Blanche would not like to sacrifice Pasta!" said Lady Leighton, laughing. "She is an enthusiast."

"If, like Mrs. Forbes, I had never heard Pasta," said Miss Leighton, blushing at her own courage in addressing their severe hostess, "I should think it no sacrifice to relinquish the opera. Nor can I, like her, appreciate music, for I have never had a solitary hour to lighten. *I* have studied music only for the amusement of others. Some day or other, perhaps, I shall love it for my own."

"No," replied Mrs. Forbes, smiling. "You are not likely to live in retirement — You are born for the world."

"We know not what we were born for!" cried Lady Leighton, pleased to see how soon the merit of her daughter thawed the coldness of Mrs. Forbes. "I, for instance, saw the light in a settlement among the Ghauts — obscure, poor, feeble. Yet it has been my fate to walk through life under the shadow of majesty, in the most polished country of the West. Blanche, whose youth has basked in the sunshine, may have to freeze in the shade."

"I am not afraid!" said the girl, smiling fondly at her mother. "There was a warrior who said, 'What is fear? I never saw it!' I say, What is misfortune!"

"Do not, however, disbelieve in its existence!" said Marcia, gravely. "The boastful man you speak of, died defeated and disgraced."

"Away with your inference!" cried Lady Leighton, the colour rising vividly in her cheeks. "Have you the heart to predict misfortune to my Blanche!"

"God forbid!" exclaimed Mrs. Forbes, astonished to perceive the genuine emotion agitating the frame of Lady Leighton, usually regulated by the strictest discipline of fashionable immobility. She began to conceive that maternal affection might operate the miracle of regeneration even in a nature like hers.

"I trust you will come and see me in Berkeley Square?" inquired her ladyship, rising to take leave, with the tears still glistening in her eyes. And after glancing at the soft cheek of Blanche Leighton, flushed by the excitement of a conversation so different from the cold insipidities she was in the habit of hearing, Mrs. Forbes found it impossible to answer "No."

CHAP. XXXVI.

“ Monsieur le comte, on vous demande !
 Si vous ne mettez le holà
 Le peuple se revoltera.”
 “ Dites au peuple qu'il attende,
 Il faut que j'aille à l'opéra.”

PONT NEUF DU COMTE DE MAUREPAS.

THE season and the session, meanwhile, had opened together ; and opened with auspicious promise to the quietists of the court party. All was sunshine. The Marquis of Shetland progressed, like a god of light, in daily festivities, from Lord Tottenham's to Lord Baldock's, from Lord Baldock's to Lord Laxington's ; and so on, through all the signs of his zodiac. Ireland grumbled a little,—the manufacturers groaned,—and the continent occasionally growled in the distance. But *who* could give ear to such inharmonious sounds, when Donzelli and Malibran were singing ; or who deign to notice the menacing gestures of a mob of wretches who cried aloud that their bread was taxed and their children starving, when Taglioni, the hand-maid of the graces, was making her *début* at the opera ! The Bayadère was in possession of every heart and eye. No ear was disengaged for the “sound and fury, signifying nothing,” of the most high court of Parliament.

The world of luxury is an entrancing world ! Let no one presume to undervalue the mightiness of its influence who has not encountered and overcome the ordeal ! Its lights burn so brightly,—its harmonies breathe so deliciously,—its beauties shine so softly,—its impressions succeed each other so rapidly,—that

the young and even middle-aged philosopher had need retreat into his tub ere he venture to defy its allurements. And yet it is from the midst of the crowd thus infatuated with pleasure, that the wretched seek sympathy for their sordid and repellent woes. It is from the puissant and the pampered, that the interests of the people demand legislative protection. It is to the man covered with purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day, that the beggar lifts up his sores, in confidence of mercy ! Vain delusion ! When God hardened Pharaoh's heart, it was by the influence of prosperity ; and, to render him even *just* towards the children of Israel, plagues and adversity became his portion !

The Marquis of Shetland, for instance, was a man humane towards individuals, but without sympathy with the mass. The same faculties which had rendered him a mighty soldier, converted him into a little minister. His arguments of cast-iron might be snapt asunder, but never modified. As he floated on the surface of the waves, in a trim galley with well-filled sails and music and sunshine on the deck, it never occurred to him how vast, how powerful, how fearful, how cold, how engulphing, the element that ministered to his course ! It was *made*, he fancied, to float the vessel of the state ; and what signified the numberless living things, leviathans or minnows, obscured in the unfathomable abyss ?

Meanwhile the galley *did* float. The Cleopatra of Luxury sat there in her gorgeous chair ; and Fashion measured its progress with her silver oars. The influence of the class represented by Bernard Forbes was like the sweeping whirlwind's sway,

which, hush'd in grim repose, expects its prey,

overlooked or derided. Julia Tottenham and her sister butterflies flew, with sparkling wings, from ball-room to ball-room. The Eardleys and Tottenhams, and their gay associates, could scarcely find time, in the four-and-twenty hours, for the sleep they were compelled to steal from such a variety of pleasures. It was admitted by every foreign ambassador who visited England, that the surface of things was wrought to the highest pitch of polish. They admired its Parliament, matched in eloquence, like the hounds of Theseus, with “ mouths each under each ;” its public virtue, so symmetrically diminutive, “ small by degrees, and beautifully less ;” its army, so well flogged ; its architecture, if not of marble, so well stuccoed. The French Ambassador protested that the *cuisine* in London must be irreproachable, since every Milor talked like a professor of cookery ; the Neapolitan, that it was only in the Haymarket a cantatrice could sing, or figurante dance, since the House of Peers legislated behind the scenes ; his Austrian Excellency, that it was only in Saint James’s Street a man could gamble, where, to gain admittance into a club, required as many quarterings as for a Chapter of the Empire ! Vice was so exceedingly decorous that it might have taken its seat on the Bench of Bishops ; and corruption, in phosphorescent rottenness, sent forth a shining light. England, in short, was as the beautiful Savannah ; where rattle-snakes are hidden among the flowers, and pestilential vapours lurk in every entanglement of verdure. Such was the state of things, when a word went forth which, though cautiously whispered, sounded like a knell in the ears of the wanton crew dancing hand in hand in that meadow of noxious beauty. “ The King was indisposed ! ” Accustomed to listen to such announce-

ments, on the mere aching of a royal finger, the courtiers made a wry face, and were exceedingly sorry. But the wry face was soon changed to one of real dismay; for *this* time, the wolf was come in earnest!—

A few were deeply concerned; for George the Fourth was a kind master, and gracious to his frogs; and, exhibiting, in a higher degree, the most showy qualifications of his aristocracy, might, in a better school, have acquired the best virtues of his people. But the many were full of consternation; and the country cowered under the shadow of coming events!

Windsor Castle became invested with a mournful and peculiar interest. Society, which had not hitherto attempted to penetrate the secrets of its gilded portals, became full of curiosity, now that a gloomy ensign was hoisted on its towers. The great (and how many had been *made* great by his influence!) believing that the anchor of Toryism would be torn up in the approaching tempest, prayed fervently for the life of the King; while the little were eager to learn whether he who had so little troubled himself “to teach them how to live,” would “teach them how to die.” The Whigs were gathering by twos and threes; and the people hailed their appearance as that of the sea-birds which harbinger a storm. A new era was already in its morning twilight.

Meanwhile, in a remote room of that stately castle, whence expresses were now hourly despatched with tidings of the decline of the king, and where every breath and murmur was supposed to prognosticate a change, sat Susan Hamilton, watching over the cradle of a little helpless dying child,—the diminishing point of that mighty chain of being which commenced in the chamber of Majesty.—Her husband was in unre-

mitting attendance on the King, who, in the softened mood of sickness, had kindly forbidden the removal of his wife and child.

"Let them stay here," faltered one to whom the decay of mortal nature was teaching the gentler secrets of the heart. "Let them benefit by my medical attendants."

And very often, when the skill of his physicians was insufficient to secure remission from pain and uneasiness, he would ask, gaspingly, of Sir Henry Halford after the state of Mrs. Hamilton's child,—a creature no other person living cared for but its mother. There was a bond of sympathy between the dying infant and dying King. Their infirmity reduced them to an equality.

"Go to your wife, Hamilton," he was often heard to say; "I understand she is fretting sadly;—go to your wife." And Augustus, who cared so little for his child, and so much for the golden source of his prosperity, was compelled to play the fond father and tender husband,—at the command of the King!

His task, whether of courtier or parent, was not of long duration. The heir of his honours, and the sovereign by whom they had been conferred, were alike on the confines of the dust. Archbishops, chancellors,—the Church, the Law, the Court,—were ministering to the comfort of the last hours of one about to appear, unsupported and uncounselled, before the throne of God:—a mother's tears poured the only sacrament of grace on the brow of the suffering babe, about to return, in its innocence, to the parent Spirit of the creation! The Angel of Death stood by the couch of majesty, unawed by its paraphernalia of greatness. But already his sternness had resisted the clinging, clasping, agonised tenderness with which the love of

the young mother defended her child against his approach. For though, during the last week of his life, the King was informed, on inquiring daily after “poor Mrs. Hamilton’s child,” that it was better, lest the word “*dead*” should produce a sinister impression on his feelings, Susan was already following its little body on the road to Laxington. It was fitting that the last piece of intelligence afforded to George the Fourth should be a falsehood!

Susan, ever tractable, was, in her mood of affliction, more tractable than ever. When her husband explained that, in the precarious state of his majesty, it was impossible for a servant (and the son of a servant) so deeply indebted to his bounties, to quit the castle in order to follow to the grave the remains of a child scarcely more than a twelvemonth old, she made no opposition to his will. Her kind Marcia came down from town to be the companion of her melancholy journey; and on a fine morning in June, a fine summer morning when the earth is all gladness and the sky all brightness, a mourning coach, followed by Lord Laxington’s travelling carriage, quitted the castle, ere day-break, so as to create no confusion in the royal household, soon to be disorganised by a more imposing ceremony.

Mrs. Hamilton’s grief was pious and tranquil. While the child was *there* in life before her, occupying her every thought and care, she fancied it all in all. Now it was gone, and she saw that nothing missed it, and no one mourned for it, she felt that it had been important only to herself;—that heaven had given it for her joy, and withdrawn it for her humiliation. No one but herself had marked the glances of love in its mournful eyes;—no one but herself had doated upon the occasional gleams of health that spoke promise on

its cheek. All was over ; and no one but herself wept that the silver lozenge on the little coffin before her, from which she had turned back the pall to contemplate the inscription of "Clement, son of Augustus Frederick Hamilton and Susan his wife," contained the sole record of its brief existence. Her head throbbed, her eyes were blinded with tears, as she pressed the hand of Mrs. Forbes ; for she felt that, brief as it was, that existence included her sum of mortal happiness !

It was strange that Susan, at whose marriage her future residence at Weald Park afforded a chief prospect of joy, was now, for the first time, returning into Northamptonshire ! One autumn passed on the continent, and one at Windsor, had engrossed the two years of her married life ; and now, she was about to revisit those well-remembered scenes of home, as a mourner,—as a Rachel,—as one who had tasted the sparkling chalice of life, and found it bitterness. The critical state of public affairs forbade either Lord Lexington or his son to bear her company at this melancholy epoch. But Marcia promised to remain with her some days at Weald. She dreaded her mother's company for the tender nerves of Susan.

Nothing was easier than for Mrs. Hamilton to acquiesce. She only wept. She hoped to listen and reply on the morrow ; when, after passing the night at Weald Park, the ceremony of interment was to take place. One thing, however, she heard, and heard with pain, as towards evening they approached Lexington. The church bells were ringing a merry peal —just such a peal as they had rung when, on her wedding day, she departed from the place. Susan flung herself upon her sister's bosom, and sobbed convulsively. The funeral procession had not been ex-

pected during day-light ; and the inhabitants had only just time to close their windows as it passed, and silence their ill-timed rejoicings in honour of the birth of a son and heir to Everleigh Hall.

CHAP. XXXVII.

A power is passing from the earth
To breathless Nature's dark abyss ;
But when the mighty pass away
What is it more, than this —
That man by God's high will sent forth
Must still to God return ;
Such ebb and flow shall ever be,
Then wherefore should we mourn ?

WORDSWORTH.

MEANWHILE a greater event had taken place ; an event which, though of no deeper importance than the transit of a single soul from time to eternity, was fated to form an epoch in universal history.

The heralds of England had proclaimed the death and the accession of a king. The new courtiers were drest in smiles, the old, in tears, and *all* in mourning. The people, forgetting apparently that, in a constitutional monarchy, a change of ministry is of more consequence than a change of Kings, overlooked the delinquencies of the old administration, in the merits of the new sovereign. It was a long time since a King had met them, face to face. The rising generation were glad to ascertain that the crown was not worn by a hippogriff ; and His Majesty, bred in a profession too critical in its vicissitudes to deal in the etiquettes of life, and, at present unlearned in the

precept delivered to Louis XV., by his Chancellor, that “ Kings themselves are but ceremonies,”—was well satisfied to set their minds at rest.—A female court, too, was, for the first time, for many years, established; and the world began to talk of King George and Queen Charlotte, and fancy they had retrograded to those “ good old times,” which ended in the riots of Eighty, and the American war!

The Whigs, though surprised to find themselves little advanced by the grand vicissitude, soon became satisfied that the King had done wisely to let the fall of their adversaries become the work of the country, rather than of his single will, and confident that they were slowly, but safely, ascending the hill ; while the Tories were too well pleased to find themselves still ascendant, to have leisure for evil auguries. Perhaps the two members of the party least astonished at their own good fortune, were the Marquis of Shetland and Augustus Hamilton ; the former, because he fancied he could “ command success,”—the latter, because persuaded that he “ deserved it.”—Peregrine Varden punned on, more vivaciously than ever ; ungrateful to the kind master he had lost, and faithless to the new master he had gained.

To Lord Laxington, it appeared essential that himself and his family should be seen on the best of terms with the powers that were. Long, therefore, before her grief was pacified, Susan was recalled from Weald to the presidency of the mansion in Spring Gardens ; and required to figure at the meeting of Parliament under the new reign, and wherever their Majesties deigned to honour with their presence the resorts of the Aristocracy. In the new court, Mrs. Hamilton was still more distinguished than in the former. The gentle modesty which enhanced her beauty, and the

virtuous name which had come out pure and spotless even from the deeply engrained hands of fashion, *had* their reward. Lord Laxington had the satisfaction to congratulate his daughter-in-law on the appointment of woman of the Bed-chamber; and began to think that, in spite of her seeming want of tact, “*rien n'est si adroit qu'une conduite irréprochable!*”

Three weeks passed in retirement at Weald Park had produced the most beneficial results for Mrs. Hamilton; not only in re-establishing her health, but affording leisure for meditation. It is incalculable how much a month of complete abstraction from the influence of the world, affects the human character: the scales fall from our eyes; the mists of conventionalism disappear. Could Kings and Ministers, Sultans and Viziers, secure such a blessing,—some landing place to pause on, in their Scala dei Giganti, where contemplation might “prune her feathers and let grow her wings,”—how different would be the destinies of Nations!

Susan Hamilton's philosophy, however, was simply of a self-reprehensive nature. In the vigils of *her* solitude, she reproached herself with having been selfish in her joys, selfish in her sorrows; with having neglected the husband on whom she doated, the father-in-law to whom she was grateful, the friend who had been her comforter in a foreign land. Her first effort should be a visit to Everleigh; and Mrs. Forbes, to whom she communicated her intentions, and who heard them with a heightened colour, secretly comforted herself with the notion that Caroline would not be well enough to receive company before their return to town. The Berkely family had entered into a compact to say nothing to Susan, particularly in her present shattered state of nerves, on the subject of her

ill-fated connection with Mrs. Cadogan ; concluding that Caroline's sense of decency would prompt her to moderate their intimacy.

They did not know, — *none* knew, Mrs. Cadogan ! The administrators of the law are often heard to say that *no* offenders brought before them are so audacious as depraved women ; and it has passed into a proverb that

A shameless woman is the worst of men !

But the depraved woman who is a hypocrite, if less injurious to public morals, is infinitely more wicked than the shameless. Poison, pent within the heart, concentrates its venom ; and there is no divining to what excess of crime the mind may attain that nourishes itself on vice.

And Caroline was not only a revolted spirit, but a miracle of hypocrisy ! Born with high endowments of beauty and intellect, she fancied herself, as she grew up, a victim to the injustice of Providence ; and loathing the marriage ordained for her, and the bigotry of her mother, found no refuge for a perverse nature but in duplicity ! Education had done nothing to enlarge her mind ; and it contracted at last, in quintessential malignity, into the poison-drop that inflicts destruction on others. She had begun, by wearing a smiling face when she was discontented ; she found it easy, at last, to wear an innocent one while sinning. Her sole care was to abstain from such indiscretions as might forfeit the place she held in society ; and she was forced to adulterate the woman she hated, in order to impose upon a husband she despised.

But though she hated Susan, she could not despise *her*. The purity of Mrs. Hamilton's mind and character shone before the eyes of the fallen one,—the more than

fallen — the *corrupted* one, like a “rock of alabaster piled up to the clouds.” Susan’s face was to *her* as the face of an accusing angel.

The judgments of God often overtake, in secret, the impenitent offender. Many a green tree is suddenly dried up and withered, and no man suspects that the lightning of Heaven scathed it in the night-season : and many a human being waxes wan and smileless, and no man conjectures that fear and remorse are inflicting silent pangs upon his soul. In Mrs. Cadogan’s hour of anguish, she recollects for how evil a purpose she had presented her services as the attendant and comforter of Susan. Even when her child (the child of shame, but far more an object of affection than the pledges of her lawful love) was placed in her arms, and she was thanked by her husband for the heir she had given to the honours of his ancient name, she remembered the holiness of Susan’s joy, the devoutness of her prayer, while imprinting a first kiss upon the brow of *her’s*, and shuddered as she looked upon the offspring of guilt.

But a still severer retribution was in store for her. She knew of Mrs. Hamilton’s loss, and rejoiced that it would secure her sick-room from her presence ; when, one morning, as she lay on her sofa, near an open window, enjoying the delicious balminess of the summer atmosphere, the door of her dressing-room was gently opened, and Susan, quiet and unannounced, stole in. Caroline would have given worlds to evade the visit. But there she was, chained to her couch, without even a bell at her disposal ; and when Mrs. Hamilton put aside her mourning veil, and bent over her with a kind, womanly kiss, a sudden flush of fever seemed to pervade the frame of the delinquent. A tear

was on her face, that had fallen from Susan's ; which scorched her like a drop of liquid fire !

While taking a solitary morning drive in the neighbourhood of Everleigh (Marcia being detained at home, writing letters to her husband), Mrs. Hamilton had found courage for the visit.

" I have been very unhappy since we parted," said she, in all the simplicity of grief, " *very* unhappy. But, for Augustus's sake, I must learn to overcome my affliction."

" You have so many remaining sources of happiness," observed Mrs. Cadogan, in a low voice ; but she could not finish her sentence.

" We have all sources of happiness, if we knew how to render them available," said Susan, sighing ; " but some are fated to deeper afflictions than others ; some to brighter fortunes.—Yourself, dear Caroline ! How completely are all your desires realised ! With health — fortune — an adoring husband—beautiful children, and affectionate friends, how happy you are ! Do not think me despicable if I regard you as an object of envy ! "

What would not Caroline have given for the entrance of her husband, or of a servant, to silence this ill-timed enthusiasm.

" You must show me your little boy," resumed Mrs. Hamilton, after a painful pause.

" Surely the sight of a child would be too painful to you !" remonstrated the invalid.

" No, no !" replied Susan, with a quivering lip. " I *must* see children—I *must* accustom myself to see them, without emotion ;—and with whose can I better commence my hard lesson, than with yours ?—You, so kind a friend, will show indulgence to my weakness ! "

"I cannot—I—I—"

"Nay, dear Caroline! Believe me to be the best judge of my own feelings! It would *soothe* me to hold your child in my arms!"

"Not yet!—You *must* excuse me!" faltered Mrs. Cadogan, her heart beating more quickly than she had fancied it would ever beat again. But her will was not to be consulted. The head nurse, proud of the heir of Everleigh, and desirous to exhibit to a visitor the magnificent lace of its cockade, thought proper to parade her charge into the room; without dreaming that the deep mourning of the lady-guest had any reference to a loss rendering its presence disagreeable.

"See, ma'am!" cried the old lady, approaching Mrs. Hamilton, without regard to the prohibitions of her mistress, "See what a pair of hazel eyes,—the very moral of its papa—pretty dear!—Lord bless you, ma'am, I nursed Mr. Cadogan himself, ma'am, when he wasn't no bigger than this precious darling; and he was as like this babby, he was, as two drops of water."

But another resemblance was sickening in the heart of Susan! Her own lost child seemed to rise before her eyes!

"Ah, Caroline!" said she, seizing the cold hand of Mrs. Cadogan, and motioning to the nurse to take away the infant. "You were right! Forgive me!—I shall love your boy very much some day or other. I have long intended to ask you to let it be my god-child."

"My dear Mrs. Hamilton, you do us too much honour!" exclaimed Cadogan, who had entered, unperceived, the door opened by the departing nurse. "Nothing will give me greater pleasure. Nay, you must persuade my friend Hamilton to take his share in your duties. Give my kind regards to him, and—"

"No!" said Mrs. Cadogan, faintly. "I wish—I rather intend—I—" She stopped short.

"Have you formed, then, without consulting me, any engagements on the subject?" said Cadogan, settling his chin in his cravat.

"Not exactly—but—"

"Allow me, then, my dear, to arrange the matter at once. Supposing, my dear Mrs. Hamilton, we were to call the little fellow Augustus?" he persisted, too full of his heir to notice the agitation of his wife; and knowing that, as the Hamiltons' child had been christened "Clement," the name would produce no painful associations.

"As you please!" replied Susan, overcome by the triumphant joyousness of his voice and manner, and eager to depart.

"I will write a line, then, to my friend Hamilton. Better that the compliment of the request should come from *me*. Are you going, Mrs. Hamilton?—Allow me to take you to your carriage."

"Good bye, Caroline," said Susan, in a tremulous voice, as she quitted the room. "I shall see you again shortly."

"I trust not—I devoutly trust not!" ejaculated the conscience-struck Mrs. Cadogan, when they were gone, and she found herself alone. "Such struggles, often repeated, would destroy me!"

But she was spared a repetition of her punishment. Within a few days Mrs. Hamilton was, by the mandate of Lord Laxington, recalled to London.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

A plague of opinion! — A man may wear it on both sides — like a leather jerkin. — *Troilus and Cressida*.

THESE family events, combined with the death of the King and its consequences, spared Mrs. Forbes for a time the risk of disobedience to her husband, by compliance with the pressing invitations of Lady Leighton. But her ladyship was not to be distanced. — On pretext of inquiring after the afflicted Susan, she again intruded on Marcia; and *this* time, was so fortunate as to find the Marquis of Claneustace and Sir Edward Berkely established in Mrs. Forbes's drawing-room. How lucky she thought herself, at that moment, that the fair Blanche's suit of sables happened to be so peculiarly becoming!

"By the way, my dear Lady Leighton," cried Sir Edward, interrupting the compliments passing between his sister and her guest, "are we to congratulate or condole with you, on these recent events?"

"Whichever you please! — No one is more indifferent than myself to political changes."

"A lady should never call herself indifferent. Let her be good, or bad, but not indifferent!" cried the rattle-pate.

"*Cool*, then, in politics. Will that suit you?"

"Worse and worse! — With the many, cool stands for impudent. Call yourself better names, I beseech you."

"Well, then, I will call myself no politician!" said Lady Leighton, resolved not to be affronted.

"Quite right — *politic*, but no politician! What

woman, indeed, ever approached within millions of miles of a politician! — I have seen them swallow bad air and bad jokes, in the Ventilator; and elbow each other in the gallery of the Lords, as though a Duchess could show as much temper as an apple-woman. But there is not such a thing in England — (Heaven be thanked) as a female politician. — Mrs. Masham was the last; and *she* was a chambermaid."

"Surely," observed Blanche Leighton, — whose courage was roused by a surmise that the tone of Sir Edward was designedly disrespectful towards her mother, — "surely, we are to suppose that such women as Lady Lisle, Lady Fanshawe, and Lady Rachel Russell, entertained strong political opinions; — though made theirs, perhaps, in the first instance, by the influence of those they loved!"

Sir Edward bowed ironically to the young lady. Even the modest blush with which she spoke, did not controvert his notion that Lady Leighton's daughter must be playing a part. — "I have heard of hereditary politicians, and conventional politicians, and politicians of all odd sorts and kinds," cried he. "But this is the first time I ever heard of a politician on sentiment."

"Do not argue with my brother, Miss Leighton," interposed Mrs. Forbes. — "It is labour lost for a woman to take the part of her sex against a man predetermined not to be convinced."

"My confidence is pretty equal in politicians of either gender," cried Sir Edward. "A man's political views are, like his views in perspective, dependent on his standing-ground. Once upon a time, I inclined towards liberalism myself. But Claneustace soon got so far beyond me on the same road, that, hating to be looked back upon, I turned and went a different way. And now, my politics are those of my red coat. I stand

by the minister who, like Charlemagne, writes treaties with the point of his sword, and seals them with its pommel; and not only say '*Vive le Roi, quand même,*' but '*Vive le ministre !*'"

"But does it follow that, because you are a weather-cock, there exists no solid rock?" said his sister.

"I have one brother-in-law, a radical, a greatest happiness man, a corn-law rhymer," cried Sir Edward;—"the other, a junior lord of the Admiralty (who once asked me if tar was made of liquorice):—both very fine fellows! But the mere fact of making first a low bow to one, and then to the other, converts me into a *girouette*. *You*, my dear Lady Leighton," he continued,—determined to interrupt the conversation into which her ladyship was drawing Lord Claneustace,—“you, who have been, and are, all consistency, what do you intend to do, now our friends the Tories have insulted the people of England by assuring them they are not in half so much distress as it is their pleasure to be thought?—Do you intend to retreat with the line of march, or loiter behind and be taken prisoner?”

“I intend,” said Lady Leighton, afraid of giving him a rational answer, “to follow the standard of the worst minister who presents himself; sure and certain that *he* will be the popular man.”

“While I,” said Lord Claneustace, “am keeping my allegiance for the leader whose policy promises the extinction of pauperism.”

“The leader who is able to feed seven millions of craving stomachs with five barley loaves and two small fishes?” cried Sir Edward. “Right! he shall be *my* man, too; and may we witness his avatar, before we find ourselves swallowed up by that voracious Mammoth, the starving poor. The English are always expecting to be devoured alive by some giant or other.

In my childhood, Bonaparte was the Ogre ; in my boyhood, Sir Robert Wilson threatened us with the Russians. Now, our *croque-mouton* lives at home,—the Pauper mob."

"We hear too much of them to have much to apprehend!" said Lady Leighton, sick of the conversation. "The most dangerous enemies are those who come like Lear's soldiers, shod with felt; not those who advance, like Chrononhotontologos, with drums beating and colours flying. What constituted, the other day, the irresistible force of the Parisian mob? — Unity of purpose and suddenness of impulse."

"The people of Paris had to resist unconstitutional measures," said Lord Claneustace,— "measures only to be frustrated by the power of brute force. *We* would purge and purify the constitution itself;—an operation that requires time, forethought, counsel, deliberation."

"The longer you deliberate the better!" exclaimed Sir Edward. "I am not fond of witnessing demolitions, till convinced that something better will arise in the vacant space. It is easy to fancy and design amendments. But recollect Staines Bridge, which, condemned for insecurity thirty years ago, has survived three new ones, on improved principles! What says our sister, learned in the law, to a case so much in point?"

"I say, as Bernard says, that you ramble too loosely on such matters. In times like these, every man should make choice of a banner; and, having satisfied his conscience that he has chosen worthily, fight firmly and bravely to the last."

"Under which king, Bezonian? — speak, or die!"

No longer a war of Two Roses, but of two Thistles!

No! Marcia, no order of political battle for me!— Swing may make free with a few of Lord Laxington's barns, and frighten my mother and Pen. Smith out of their senses. But the good sense of the middle classes of England, 'by their own weight made steadfast and immovable,' will prevent the conflagration from spreading."

"My dear Edward," rejoined his sister, "you see things with the eyes of your club, hear them with the ears of your mess, and talk with the mouth of a mandarin of the Celestial empire! But this will not do. Were a Bavarian or Tyrolian to deny the existence of the ocean, because he never beheld it, you would call him a fool. And you, who know little more of the spirit and condition of the people than may be learned in a battue at Stoke Park, or in St. James's Street on a levee day, have no right to impugn the better information of Lord Claneustace, who has had to deal with a large and disaffected body of tenantry; or of Bernard, whose correspondents at Sheffield and Birmingham (men of first-rate importance among the manufacturing classes) have lately communicated to him intelligence the most alarming. Only last night, I heard him confidently predict to Lord Claneustace that, within three months, there must be a total change in the measures of government, or a revolution in the country."

"Thank goodness we leave town for Brighton next week!" cried Lady Leighton, rising to take leave. "I long to get a little respite from hearing of these things."

"*Respite?*" gravely reiterated Lord Claneustace. "Better prepare yourself for listening to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing *but* the truth. The Tories of to-day remind one of the Scythians of old,

who used to put out the eyes of their slaves that nothing might divert their attention while grinding their masters' corn. But the People are beginning to insist on the use of their own eyes ; and it is time for all England to know that a new era of our national history is approaching. Let us devoutly trust that the regeneration of the country may not be solemnised by a baptism of blood."

CHAP. XXXIX.

And now the STORM-BLAST came,— and he
Was tyrannous and strong ;
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased them south along.

Ancient Mariner.

WHO does not remember the fearful approach of the great crisis of the autumn of 1830, when the people of England, habituated to the excitement of public changes by the death of their sovereign, and the deposition of the King of France, seemed unwilling that a day should pass without its historical event ? For many months, their attention had been engaged by public lamentations, or public rejoicings,— by funeral knells or joyous rebecks,— by outcries against the Wellington administration, or threats against that of Polignae ; and a peaceful return to their avocations and submissive citizenship, appeared impossible. Every hour brought tidings of mischief from the provinces. The country was in an uproar. Chaos was come again !

The event of the general election dealt dismay to an administration attacked on one side by the Ultra-

Tories, on the other by the Radicals, and menaced in full front by the more efficient forces of the Whig party. The fire-raisings and riots devised by a set of lawless madmen, while they served no political purpose, added to the general consternation ; and, as the pacific part of the community became overwhelmed with terror, the temerity and activity of the agitators hourly increased. Before the close of October, the meeting of the new parliament brought the chief families connected with government to London. Already, the Shetlands, Tottenhams, and Hamiltons were at their post.

Few persons suffered more, under the system of intimidation pursued at that moment by the opposition press, than the gentle Susan Hamilton. The sanguinary details of the French and Belgic Revolutions were never absent from her mind. With restless anxiety, she perused the threats of the public journals ; and already beheld, in imagination, her husband and her husband's father, fugitives, like Polignac and Peyronnet before the fury of the populace ; or confined for life in those pleasant apartments on the banks of the Thames which are entered through the Traitor's Gate ! —Her brother, scarcely believing in the reality of her fears, did his best to exaggerate the picture. One day, he arrived in Spring Gardens with tidings of the discovery of a revolutionary plot ; the next, he informed her, in confidence, that Bernard Forbes was about to bring forward a motion for the impeachment of ministers ; very rarely did he allow her a day of peace. She was never easy, during the absence of Augustus ; and Augustus was almost always absent. “ Poor fellow ! he had such a weight of public business on his hands ! ”

When at home, however, his conduct towards his

wife was kind and exemplary. Never had his manners appeared so gentle, or his professions so affectionate. The Hamiltons had passed a month together at Weald; a month partly enlivened by the splendid festivities of Everleigh, and partly saddened by the melancholy condition of Lady Berkely, who had been visited by a paralytic seizure which left her imbecile and helpless. But even Mrs. Hamilton's anxiety on her mother's account was merged in her more poignant fears for her husband. She had lost her child. Circumstances tended to estrange her from her brother and sister. She had nothing, *nothing* left but Augustus!

Right glad was she, indeed, to quit Weald on the meeting of parliament. During her stay in Northamptonshire, scarcely a day had passed in which Pen. Smith did not manage to cross her path with tidings of some new outrage directed or purposed against the Hamilton family. The town of Laxington, foreseeing its early liberation from the authority of the house of Tottenham, exhibited the usual temper of a slave on the eve of emancipation; as if it could not sufficiently atone, in turbulence, for the tranquillity of its long subjection. The High Street, satisfied in its mind that the day of Hamilton influence was over, instead of re-festooning its shop windows on the approach of the family, hung out banners of disaffection in the shape of long streamers of cotton pocket-handkerchiefs, bearing the effigies of O'Connell and Cobbett. The apothecary arranged his red, blue and white bottles *à la tricolor*; while the proprietor of the hogshead of macevado had a petition in favour of Reform always lying ready for signature on his counter. To the great disgust of Mr. Attorney Smith, two manufactories were in process of erection on a parcel of land in the Laxington meadows, disposed of by Lord

Lancashire for that purpose, at the rate of a guinea an inch, and likely to be included in any future enlargement of the liberties of the borough. A reading-room was established, in which the *Examiner* newspaper and *Westminster Review* were unblushingly read, in open day-light, by the subscribers. Altogether, things wore so heinous an aspect, that it was plain the white cat was no longer purring in the sunshine, but setting up her back for a contest, and preparing her claws for future mischief.

In vain did the Earl and Countess of Tottenham, and their sons and daughters, pass a week at Weald Park, for the purpose of doing the popular, and patching up their dilapidated influence. Old Mrs. Mangles shook her head, and shed a tear or two on learning that they had been welcomed to the neighbourhood by a bonfire of the outbuildings of one of their farms ; nor could Susan Hamilton forbear repeating to herself that if the working classes were thus exasperated against the inoffensive Earl, of whom they knew so little, saving through his courtesies, they were far more likely to wreak vengeance upon her husband ; who, from the moment of his settlement among them, had not scrupled to “whelm them with a weight of scorn,” break the fences of the farmers,—horsewhip their labourers,—ride over their corn,—shoot their game,—and accost them with all the virulence of polite execration. Heartily did she rejoice when the family was once more established in Spring Gardens !

“ I am *so* happy to be in London, these long dark nights ! ” said she to Mrs. Tottenham, soon after their arrival. “ At Weald, I was always in apprehension of something,—I hardly know what.”

“ I am afraid you have more to dread in town,” replied Julia, with little sympathy for the nervous tre-

mours of her sister-in-law. "I reollect, when living in Clifford Street, as a child, seeing Mr. Robinson's house pulled down by the populace, during the Corn Riots. A man or two were shot in the affray."

"But you surely do not apprehend they will proceed to such extremities on *this* occasion?"

"I wish they would!" cried William Tottenham, grinding his teeth. "If they would only afford us a pretext for bringing a field-piece or two into play, or, at least, for a charge of cavalry and a few volleys of musket-shot, to give the people a hint *who* are their masters, things would go on afterwards as smooth as glass."

"Fire upon the people?" ejaculated Susan.

"Why not? It is the only language they understand."

"One might as well first try the effect of civil words," cried his wife, laughing.

"If *I* were the Duke of Wellington," cried her husband, gradually working himself into a passion, "I would hang a dozen of those incendiary blackguards as high as Haman, as an example to the country. We should hear no more of 'Swing.'"

"But have we reached that convenient point of legislation, when Prime Ministers proclaim military law, and play the provost-marshal with their fellow-subjects, at their own good will and pleasure?" exclaimed Julia, who delighted in seeing her usually apathetic husband in a passion. "No, no, no!"

"So much the worse for the country."

"Do you know, my dear William," she persisted, "Lady Leighton is of opinion that you, and Peregrine Varden, and Eardley, and a few other absolutists, do the Tory party more harm than all the speeches of Brougham."

"Let Lady Leighton stick to her rubber, and not trouble her head about what she does not understand."

"Oh! but she is trying to *improve* her understanding. She has put herself to school (beg pardon, Susan!) in Mrs. Forbes's *bureau d'esprit*. She came home the other morning, with her hair standing on end, in admiration of Bernard Forbes's patriotism and eloquence."

"The deuce she did! Then I'm afraid things are worse with us than I was aware of," cried Tottenham.

"It will be shameful if the Duke of Wellington goes out of office just before Christmas, when we have all our debts to pay," exclaimed Mrs. Tottenham, between joke and earnest; surveying the exquisite furniture of her *bijou* of a house. "What does Augustus say about it?" said she, addressing Susan.

"About what?"

"About the only subject which just now engrosses the thoughts of mankind,—our continuance in office."

"I never asked him. But I am sure I wish the Duke *would* resign. Any thing rather than these popular murmurs and menaces."

"You stock,—you stone,—you worse than senseless thing!"

cried Julia. "My very dear sister-in-law, I have long been of opinion that you have not a grain of (I will not say common sense; for who in the world has?) but not so much as a spark of genius, which, in these times, every one pretends to; and now, I regard you as fit for Bedlam!—What on earth is to become of us, if the Whigs come in?"

"We must retire to the country. And surely the country will be quiet enough then, having got what it wanted. I shall be much happier at Weald, under such circumstances, than I have ever been in town."

"But who, do you expect, will keep up Weald for you?"

"I conclude we shall still reside with Lord Laxington," said Susan, blushing.

"And where do you suppose *he* will reside, so long as the privilege of peerage is not abrogated, which keeps him out of the King's Bench?" cried William Tottenham. "Lord Laxington is a ruined man;—that is, not *ruined*, for he had never any thing to be ruined with.—But he has not a thousand a year, independent of officee. And do you suppose his pension will enable him to retain so expensive a place as Weald Park?"

"Wherever he may choose to go, I shall not molest him by discontent. I am not fond of show; and every thing, connected with public life, pains and alarms me," said Susan. [William Tottenham shrugged his shoulders.] "I am prepared to be happy in some snug little corner, with Augustus, without troubling my head about parties or places!"

"Poor Augustus!" involuntarily ejaculated Julia; sincerely pitying her brother for having so stupid a wife.

"As if the Radicals would leave you a corner to be snug in!" sneered Tottenham.

"God forbid! I hate snug corners!" exclaimed his wife. "Better apply to Pen. Smith to say a good word for us to her friend Mr. Burtonshaw, the new Radieal member."

"Is *he* a friend of hers? That man who made the revolutionary speech the other night in the House? They say, if the Whigs come in, he will be one of the Secretaries."

"Impossible! a mere *parvenu*—a person no one knows!"

"Your *parvenu* makes a very tolerable politician. He has a double end to gain."

"Mr. Burtonshaw in office!" cried Julia. "Why, Susan, these are the very people Augustus was so scandalized by your noticing at Baden! I remember father wondering where you could have incurred such acquaintance! Do you still keep it up, my dear? If so, I recommend you to call on the new people as soon as possible!"

"Thank you for your good advice!" said Mrs. Hamilton, rising to take leave. "But Lady Leighton's policy and mine differ in most instances."

"Policy!" reiterated William Tottenham, after his sister-in-law had quitted the room. "Policy! — My dear good Mrs. Hamilton, there is not in your whole composition as much tact as would serve to govern a hen-roost!"

CHAP. XL.

Can a national principled union be resisted by the tricks of office, or ministerial manœuvres? Will heaping papers on your table, or counting majorities on a division, avert or postpone the hour of danger? It *must* arrive, my lords: and then these boastful ministers, in spite of all their confidence, shall be compelled to hide their heads. — **LORD CHATHAM.**

SUSAN was not sorry to have had her eyes opened by the Tottenhams, to the precarious situation of her husband and his family. It enabled her to understand the pre-occupation of Augustus, when they were *tête-à-tête*; and rendered excusable the virulence of his hatred against Bernard Forbes, whom he regarded as

a source of misfortune to his father. Now that she was aware how much her husband had to apprehend from the political events of the day, she became more than ever considerate in her demeanour towards him ; — forestalling his wishes, and giving up her whole time and engagements to his convenience. Till she saw him on the brink of ruin, she had never seemed to know how essential was his happiness to her own. When he returned home irritated by the rumours of the day, from his club or office, she stole about the room on tiptoe, fearful of disturbing his contemplations ; or seated herself at work in some quiet nook, to avoid the necessity of noticing the disturbance of his feelings.

“ Susan ! ” said he to her, one day, suddenly rousing himself from a reverie, as if touched by her attentions ; “ you are a very good wife ; you are kinder to me than I deserve ! ”

And Susan had some difficulty in restraining her tears. It was the kindest thing he had said to her since their marriage !

Of Lord Laxington, meanwhile, she saw little ; he was constantly occupied in conferences with the greater powers. His party hung closely together ; for though *all* had not the motives of the Hamiltons and Leightons to cling to office, for the Tottenhams and Ballocks were among the most opulent personages of the realm, the oyster-bed was too hardly knitted to the rock, and too closely intergrown within itself, to admit of the introduction of the dredge without danger to the whole community.

Had Lord Laxington stolen leisure, however, from the cares of state to bestow upon those of his private interests, he might have found cause for gratification in the respectful regard testified towards him by his

ward Lord Claneustace. For more than a year past, the political connections of the young Marquis had tended to alienate him from his guardian's house. But no sooner did the common voice proclaim the approaching downfall of the Tory party, than he sought an interview with Lord Laxington.

"I cannot but be aware, my dear lord," said he, "that any great political change may prove of immediate inconvenience to your affairs. You have ever treated me as a son; I trust you will follow up your system of kindness, by considering my means as much at your disposal as fathers have a right to consider those of their children. Honour me by the use of all I have to offer, till your affairs are arranged. Mayfield, which you made a happy home to my boyhood, is again at your disposal. Why should there be any settlement between us? In a few months, I shall attain my majority. Accept *now* my signature, to which you can then affix a general discharge of our accounts. I have no head for business. Continue, my dear lord, to overlook and distribute my revenues. Am I not a son of your own?"

Lord Laxington was deeply moved. He *had* in fact a son of his own, by whose conduct to measure the nobleness of Lord Claneustace's sentiments!

"Rely upon it," said he, pressing the hand of his ward, "when I *want* assistance I will apply to you. I did not know I possessed such a friend. You are teaching me to think better of human nature."

"By the mere fulfilment of a duty?"

"Alas! my dear Claneustace, the world interposes such clouds betwixt us and our duties, that they are easily lost sight of. Nor had I a right to expect such kindness, such disinterestedness, from the neophyte of a Bernard Forbes."

"Disinterestedness is one of the chief virtues of his code. You are mistaken in my friend Forbes."

"The disinterestedness of a man who has had neither opportunity to acquire, nor power to abjure, the distinctions and advantages of public life!"

"The *power*, you will admit, is not far distant," replied the Marquis, respectfully; "and I pledge my life on his non-acceptance of office, on any terms upon which, for years to come, it is likely to be offered."

"Then he is a fool, or worse!" cried Lord Laxington. "Recollect the wise inculcation of Lord Bacon, that 'Power to do good is the true and lawful end of aspiring; for good thoughts (though God accept them) yet towards men are little better than good dreams, except they be put in act; and *that* cannot be without power and place, as the vantage or commanding ground.' Forbes can have little confidence in his own principles, if he reject the occasion of putting them in practice."

"Pardon me,—I distinctly specified that he would not accept office on terms requiring him to act on the principles of other people. No doubt, he looks forward confidently, as I do, to modifications of the constitution, tending more largely to the happiness of the community. To borrow the words of the great statesman you have just quoted, he would 'reduce things to the first institution; but yet ask counsel of both times;—of the ancient what is best,—of the latter, what is fittest!'"

"*Modification* of the constitution!" groaned Lord Laxington. "You write yourself down a Radical, yet assure me I have trained you as a son."

"Fear no reproach from the world on that score," cried the Marquis, again kindly taking his hand. "I have, at present, no intention to expose my insuffi-

ciency, by taking an ostensible part in public life. My immediate object is to render myself of use, when and where I feel equal to the effort. My proxy is in Lord Holland's hands, and I am about to pass the winter at Claneustace Court. The neighbourhood is all but in a state of insurrection. The miners and iron workers on Lord Baldock's estates, adjoining my own, have formed a political union of a peculiar and frightful character. I am vain enough to believe these people personally attached to me. At all events, my ancestors, dwellers among them for centuries, have administered liberally to their interests; and I am sanguine that I shall persuade them to follow a more judicious course."

"Persuade them! — Persuade men in a state of rebellion, living on the plunder of other men's property and in the commission of every lawless outrage, to return to daily labour and daily privations? — A brigade of cavalry would do them better service!"

"By making it their *interest* to return to habits of subordination, I shall be gaining time till the march of events opens their ears to better arguments."

"You are not yet five-and-twenty, my dear boy," observed Lord Laxington, with a bitter smile. "Your views perhaps may be the first to change. But your intentions are noble. Go to Claneustace Court. You will at least be out of the way of the disturbances fermenting here."

"Reinember, however," exclaimed the Marquess at parting, "that I rely on you to command my presence, the moment I can be of use or comfort to you. Your son, your daughter, have engrossing ties of their own. I have none. My time is at your disposal. *May I rely on you?*"

" You may !" said Lord Laxington, striving to conceal his emotion as he recalled to mind how little the real interests of his ward had ever occupied his attention. " Your friendliness at this moment would yield me unmixed pleasure, did it not remind me that I find more duty and affection in the son of my friend, than in my own ! "

But the motives of Lord Claneustace's absence at this juncture were not by every one so honourably interpreted.

" So Claneustace has sneaked out of town to be out of the way of the city dinner !" observed Colonel Eardley to Lady Leighton and her daughter.

" I see nothing very sneaking in putting himself at the head of his yeomanry, in one of the most disturbed districts in England," said Lady Leighton, coolly. " Besides, he has a delicate part to act just now towards Lord Laxington."

" When a man is resolved to take a part in public life, personal deferences are out of the question. Claneustace votes against us. Guardian or no guardian, therefore, he *must* rejoice to see us going down hill."

" Lord Claneustace never seems to know his own mind," observed Blanche. " First, attached to Mrs. Tottenham,—then to Mrs. Forbes; two persons of such totally opposite character! And now, though brought up among Lord Laxington's party, to become the partisan of the opposition. I wonder how Sir Edward Berkely, whose character is so decided, can have chosen so inconsistent a friend."

" You hear her !" whispered Eardley to Lady Leighton; " and perceive, I trust, the uselessness of making up to Mrs. Forbes, so as to commit Leighton with his political associates ? Nature will have its

way. You will never make a Marchioness of Claneustace of your daughter."

"When you have seen more of the world, dearest Blanche," said Lady L., not even deigning to reply to the insinuations of the handsome colonel, "you will find that the minds of young gentlemen in their teens are seldom noted for stability. The freaks and changes of ordinary boys pass unnoticed. It is only the childish follies of a Byron, or a marquess with forty thousand a year, which obtain publicity. Scarcely one man in fifty but has changed his opinions, political or private, fifty times before he is fifty years of age. The cunning ones keep their fickleness to themselves; the vain ones (like our friend here the colonel) make a boast of them. The candid (like our friend Claneustace, who I regret is here no longer) make neither a mystery nor a vaunt of an infirmity common to all mankind."

"I do not like changeable people!" was Blanche's unchangeable reply. "I wonder how Sir Edward Berkely can be so fond of Lord Claneustace."

Lady Leighton was struck by this reiteration of speech, and began to wonder in her turn. She was amazed that, in spite of her own clear-sightedness and Eardley's malicious aid, she should have so long remained blind to the fact that Blanche's young affections, instead of travelling to Claneustace Court, had singled out the gay, frank, generous, honest Sir Edward Berkely. — Alas! an ensign in the guards, with twelve hundred pounds per annum!

CHAP. XLI.

Since, then, Cataline, such is the state of public affairs, finish what you have begun,—quit the city,—carry with you all your confederates; — if not all, as many as you can. The supreme safety of the commonwealth ought not to be again and again exposed to danger, for the sake of a single man.—CICERO.

“SAVE me from my friends,” is an axiom as applicable to ministries as to individuals. The ill-advised well-wishers of the Tory administration began to beset the councils of government with rumours of evil; creating giants, in the hope of adding to their importance by a pretence of aid in killing them. Gossips ran hither and thither with tales of insults offered to the different members of the administration, most of them fabulous. The public journals loudly echoed the cry; till at length the People, believing they had unwittingly intimidated the constituted authorities, set about alarming them in right earnest! They would hear of nothing but the banishment of their once loved Coriolanus.

November set in gloomily. The yellow fog, usually pervading the metropolis at that opaque period of the year, looked thicker and heavier and more ominous than usual. The Lord Mayor’s day, annually appointed to bestow on the citizens of London glimpses of a procession whose pomps are rather to be guessed at than discerned through the mists of the Thames, approached in all its dignity of gloom. The new king, having announced his gracious intention to dine with the new mayor in Guildhall, the public prints teemed with details of the oceans of custard prepared by the worshipful aldermen and the common council, for the

welcome of the sovereign ; and the ells of broadcloath laid down at the feet of Gog and Magog, to create a dining chamber of state. Bills of fare were published, till the mouths of his majesty's lieges watered, at bare imagination of the feast. The Duke of Wellington, as by custom bound, was to be of his majesty's company ; as well as the Tottenhams, Hamiltons, Baldocks, Leightons, Eardleys, Vardens, and creeping things innumerable, of lesser notoriety.

Already, rumours were afloat that a day of so much public confusion would be selected by the enemy for an outbreak. But the parties menaced were men of sense and courage, not to be intimidated by idle words ; and the preparations of the City of London were bidden to proceed. Foolhardy, indeed, did it appear to poor Susan Hamilton that, while so many persons (from Pen. Smith upwards) were of opinion that the metropolis was to be burned and sacked, on the memorable 9th of November, his majesty's ministers should persist in driving in their carriages through two miles of police-and-military-guarded streets.—But her terrors were of brief duration. Certain persons, more officious than the rest, addressed an official warning to the Home Office that a diabolical plot was in progress ; and the monarch, if not the monarchy, in danger ! To resist such a plea, would have been to incur a charge of high treason ; and, however unwillingly, government was compelled to decree the postponement of the feast !—On the fatal morning, official placards appeared on the walls, announcing that his majesty could not fulfil his gracious intentions of dining with his good city of London.

But this was poor comfort to Susan. The plot, thus formally announced, did not the less exist for the postponement of the royal visit to Guildhall. Accord-

ing to her private interpretation of the case, conspirators were already on the watch ;—*not* lying in wait for monarch or monarchy,—prince or peer ;—but in ambuscade against the solitary life of the Hon. Augustus Hamilton ! The town was full of military. But what could the military effect against a plot so admirably organised that not a man, woman, or child, of the million and a half existent in the metropolis, but was able accurately to point out the various public buildings about to be set on fire, and the exact line of march to be pursued by the insurgents ! The ministers were assembled in council ; Augustus was at his office. How did she know but that the conflict had already begun ?

A darkness was over the land. There was scarcely sufficient light that day in London to enable the citizens to pursue their usual avocations. It seemed as if the finger of heaven were inscribing a new sentence on the wall ; and that the destinies of Assyria were accomplishing !

Mrs. Hamilton was too much overcome to weep. She saw clearly, and saw without regret, that the existence of their party was at an end ; but how did she know that the existence of her husband was not at an end also ? The sky grew gloomier and gloomier. At one o'clock, she despatched a messenger to Whitehall. "Mr. Hamilton was not there." She trembled !—Into what dangers might he not be rushing ! His person was well known, and most obnoxious to the mob. For a moment, she thought of attempting to traverse the throng assembled in St. James's Park, to ascertain whether he had passed, and what was become of him. She dared not send a messenger with inquiries to Apsley House, or the residence of Sir Robert Peel ; for on no point was Augustus more sus-

ceptible than that of appearing an object of undue solicitude to his wife. But at every fresh rumour, her temples throbbed more painfully. Occasional yells of triumph reached her from a distance, when some well-known member of the senate passed through the crowd; and every now and then, Susan fancied she could discern shrieks and groans, mingling with the cries of the rioters. "Thank God this will not last!" cried she, pressing her hands to her forehead. "A few hours more, and I should expire here of agony on the spot!" —

In the extremity of her terror, she summoned Dawkins, the old and confidential house steward of Lord Laxington. Instead of entering into her distress, the man of routine could do nothing but wonder "at what o'clock my lord would return to dinner, and for how many covers the table was to be laid?" She rang for her own maid. But the fastidious Mrs. Wheeler was too full of a history of some filthy missiles thrown into Lady Leighton's carriage by the uproarious mob, to listen to a word uttered by her mistress. "Lord, lord! — what *will* them lower classes come to!" was her parting ejaculation, as she flounced off at Mrs. Hamilton's order in search of her confederate, the *valet-de-chambre*.

"Have you any idea where Mr. Hamilton is gone?" cried Susan, addressing the gentleman's gentleman.

"Probably, madam, to the Admiralty."

"I have sent there; — he is not there."

"To the House, then."

"There is no House sitting."

"Perhaps, to the Duke of Wellington's! I really, madam, cannot take upon me to say."

"Was Mr. Hamilton sent for to Apsley House?"

"Not that I am aware of. Some notes have arrived for my master since he went out this morning."

"Where are they?" inquired Mrs. Hamilton, hoping they might throw some light upon her husband's engagements.

"In my master's dressing-room, madam," said the valet. And, having already repented his candour, he was about to quit the room and remove them from the depository assigned by Mr. Hamilton for his private letters, when he found that his lady was beforehand with him. When he entered the dressing-room, the letters were already in her hands. He had only to retire from the field.

"Mere notes of invitation!" cried she, in a disappointed tone, glancing over a billet from William Tottenham, and another from Eardley, bearing no reference to the events of the day. Another was a letter from a tailor: a man of liberal principles, who, foreseeing, like herself, the extinction of the Tory administration, wrote, in no measured terms, to acquaint Mr. Hamilton, that his bill, twice renewed, was again due, and about to be placed in a lawyer's hands. The fourth letter was a still more impudent reminder from a horse-dealer. There remained but one: and, disgusted as she was by the two preceding, she hesitated to open it. A certain perfumed vapour, emanating from the envelope, suddenly stimulated her curiosity! The handwriting was not a female handwriting; yet the letter was evidently a woman's letter!

It was the first time in her life she had ever trespassed on the private papers of her husband. Though her own letters were treated by Augustus as common property, and, though he had never expressly forbidden her access to his own, she was well aware that the interdiction had never been uttered, only because he be-

lieved her incapable of so much presumption. But so far, the mischief was done. She *had* opened four ; what availed it to be more scrupulous with the fifth ? A single outburst of displeasure would suffice for all ; and the mysterious-looking missive so closely sealed at either end, might afford her a clue to his present retreat. With a trembling hand she tore open the letter. The mere signature of "Caroline" filled her heart with dismay. Ere she had perused the first half-page, the happiness of Susan's life was at an end !

Not alone from the infamous connection it served to betray. Not alone from the vauntings it contained of the beauty of their child (*their* child !)—the child she had held in her arms, had pressed to her bosom, had sanctified with her kisses ! But because she found herself an object of hatred and derision to both :—to the husband she loved—to the friend who had pretended to love her. She found herself reviled between them, as cold-hearted, selfish, inconsistent, weak ! In acquainting her paramour that she had succeeded in persuading her husband of the insecurity of their residence at Everleigh, in order to settle in town for the winter and satisfy her anxieties on *his* account by daily meetings, Mrs. Cadogan did not scruple to add that, at such a moment, she could not bear to abandon him to the society of a woman so indifferent to his danger as his cold-blooded wife.

Mrs. Hamilton sank breathless on a chair while she perused these cruel accusations. Did her senses deceive her ? Could such heinous hypocrisy exist ? *Could* she have been thus wronged — thus insulted — thus basely betrayed ? She gasped for breath. A cold dew overspread her face. The ground seemed insecure under her feet ; and her poor bewildered head sank on the outspread arms that had fallen on the

table beside her. She did not weep—she *could* not weep. She was more inclined to laugh—to laugh with that bitter, poignant, convulsive mirth, which bursts from a heart that is breaking !

CHAP. XLII.

Bring me a constant woman to her husband,
One that ne'er dream'd a joy but to content him ;
And to that woman, when she bath done most,
Yet will I add an honour,—a great patience !

SHAKSPEARE.

LUCKY was it for Mrs. Hamilton that this disastrous discovery took place at a moment when her husband was shut up in ministerial conference; for, had he made his appearance *then*, when the wound was smarting in its first insupportable anguish, there would have been no suppressing her impulses of indignation. She could not but have said: “What have I done, that you should thus betray me? What have I done, that you should impose that woman on me as a friend?”

An hour—two hours, elapsed, before calmer thoughts ensued; before she had subdued her determination to quit the roof where she had been so dealt with, and abjure for ever the society and protection of the deceiver. But, with time, indignation sobered into grief; with time, pride saddened into tears. Nothing would be easier than to abandon one so gracelessly ungrateful. But was he not on the point of being abandoned by all the world! The alternative was before her of deserting her husband in his change of fortunes; or justifying her conduct by an exposure of

the truth to the circle which formed *his* tribunal and her own.

And what would be the consequences of such a revelation? The woman (the woman she had once called “Caroline!”) would be driven from the house she had profaned; driven from the husband who respected her, and two innocent children, who had no share in the errors of their mother. Even the last,—the unfortunate,—the offspring of one man and heir of another,—what a fate of contest and condemnation would be heaped on its sinless head! She had pledged herself, at the baptismal altar, to train that little victim in the paths of godliness and peace. Yet at her sentence, the name of an ancient house was to be soiled in the dust, and the inheritor of that name cast forth, an Ishmael, into the wilderness!

And then, the mother of the offender—the grave, grey-headed, virtuous, God-fearing, mother. Would she survive such a disclosure? Nay, (for there is no end to the evils generated by a single breach of the immutable social contract, based upon a law divine) would not her own warm-hearted brother stand forth as her champion, and perhaps involve himself in a fatal quarrel with his brother-in-law? She no longer thought of him as, “Augustus.” She no longer breathed of him as her “husband!” No! he had too vilely, too meanly, too deliberately deceived her!

Again, she perused the letter. Again, poor Susan saw herself scoffed at as a poor-spirited, cold-blooded thing, whose selfishness had justly forfeited her husband’s affection. Tears began to steal down her face. It was fitting that the reproach of selfishness should be added to such a weight of injury!

At that moment, just as she had steeled her heart to the courage of quitting the house and departing for

Green-Oak, a sudden roar proclaimed the entrance of the mob into Spring Gardens. They were advancing to attack Lord Laxington's house. At every attempt made by the police constables to repel their approach, the name of Laxington, coupled with a thousand offensive epithets and frightful threats, reached the ear of the bewildered Mrs. Hamilton. They served to recal Lord Laxington to her mind. She had forgotten him!

Accustomed to over-estimate his kindness towards her, she had ever regarded him with gratitude. And now, on the day of his public disgrace,—of his private ruin,—what additional calamities was she not about to bring down upon his head! Every living soul was in a state of panic. The very nation was undergoing a grand crisis of its history. Its guardians were harassed and undecided. Blood had perhaps been spilt, or was still spilling. The liberties of the people were at stake. Had she a right,—she, poor Susan Hamilton—to dwell at such a moment upon private grievances of her own!

She expected every instant the return of Augustus. He might rush in pursued,—wounded,—mutilated; and, though the populace had been driven back from the purlieus of his house, missiles were still discharged at intervals, against the windows. And how could she accost him, if he came to say, “Susan, let us share our fate together. Your husband is a ruined man,”—with “Your misfortunes have been richly earned. Hence-forward we are strangers!”—No, no! Her gentle nature recoiled from such cruel justice.

But the case admitted no deliberation. Either she must at once resent and punish; or, locking up her injuries for a time within her heart, act as though the fatal letter had never met her eye. In mercy to many,

therefore, she resolved to dissemble. With burning eyes, and a tongue that clove to her parched palate, she kept muttering unintelligible exhortations to herself, while she re-sealed the letters, and placed them in the drawer from which she had taken them. Nor had she courage to await the result. Hastily retiring to her own room, she summoned her attendant, attributed her disordered appearance to the effect of recent alarm, and expressed a desire to lie down and rest.

"Do not let me be disturbed," said she. "When Lord Laxington and Mr. Hamilton return home, tell them I am indisposed, and wish to sleep."

And when, at a very late hour of the night, they *did* return, the pretext sufficed to secure poor Susan from interruption. In the morning a message was brought from Augustus, inquiring if she wished to see him before he quitted home; and the reiterated plea of a head-ache, and a desire for quiet, again sufficed her. A very short visit of ceremony, paid to her bedside by Lord Laxington and his son, towards evening, when they came home to dress for a political dinner, secured her from further interruption; they were too much engrossed by the state of public affairs to trouble themselves much about her. Lord L. considered it only natural, that his young and timid daughter-in-law should suffer from fright of the preceding day; while the careless husband mechanically expressed his regret at being obliged to leave her, assured her the weather was very cold, recommended her to remain in bed, and suggested that Spicer, the family apothecary, should be sent for.

Yet, trivial as were these remarks, and careless the tone in which they were uttered, not a syllable but cut to the heart of his wife!—It was the first

time she had heard his voice *since*; and it reminded her, as by a chain of association, of all the perfidies, all the falsehoods, it had long served to convey to her ears.—She recollects how plausible a tone it had assumed, for many months past, in recommending Mrs. Cadogan to her kindness, as an old friend, who must not be neglected; and how careless a one, in originally alluding to his intimacy at Everleigh, and announcing the arrival of the family at Vienna.—She remembered how coolly he had accepted, if not encouraged, her inference that his acquaintance with the Cadogans had been a mere screen to his flirtation with Lady Ashley:—Lady Ashley, like herself, a dupe!

Poor Susan!—Her colour rose; her breathing grew quicker and quicker; her pillow more and more uneasy. All night, she imagined that Augustus was still standing by her bed-side, addressing her in words of common-place civility, as if nothing particular had occurred, or was likely to occur, to a person so indifferent and so complying! All night, she fancied Caroline in the room; and that they were whispering together behind her curtains, and deriding her. She longed to ring for Wheeler, who was sleeping in the dressing-room. But the dread of creating alarm and inquiry inspired her with self-control. Next morning, Wheeler herself, alarmed by the change in Mrs. Hamilton's appearance, procured the attendance of the apothecary, who pronounced her disorder to be a feverish cold, brought on by "*the state of the weather*," and aggravated by recent agitation. After all, it was but one mischief more to attribute to that unlucky atmosphere of England, concerning which all the world seems in league to utter calumnies.

At length Augustus himself made his appearance in

the darkened chamber ; and, having taken her burning hand, recommended a saline draught. " I find Spicer is attending you," said he. " I have a great opinion of Spicer.—Spicer assures me there is nothing the matter with you but a heavy cold, and that you will be about again in a day or two. I would send for Halford. But if Sir Henry's carriage were seen at our door, at this unlucky moment, people would conclude we were taking this cursed change of affairs wonderfully to heart, and had fallen ill upon it. Or, I would write to Mrs. Forbes, to come and sit with you ; but just now, my father would scarcely have patience to hear her name."

Susan did not answer. She was trying gradually to withdraw her throbbing hand from the pressure of the traitor.

" Perhaps you would like to see your friend Mrs. Cadogan ? " he continued. " I learnt yesterday, from Cadogan, that she is in town ; at Kirkham's, I fancy, or Mivart's, or some other hotel. I could easily find out, if you wished her to be sent for."

" Thank you ; I only wish to be quiet," faltered the invalid.

" At all events, I will call on her as I go to the House, and let her know how much you are indisposed. I have no doubt she will be here in the course of the day."

" Oh ! no, no, no ! " said Susan, faintly, and, trying to raise her hand, interdictingly. " Indeed, I can see no one."

" I believe you are right," he replied. " Under all the circumstances, it is as well you should be alone. When women get together, they *will* chatter ; and the fewer remarks that get abroad into society from this house, the better. It will not do to let people suppose

we are in a state of dismay. Things may yet come round. Keep your spirits up, Susan. If we can only fight on till the holidays, the duke will secure every thing before the re-assembling of parliament."

CHAP. XLIII.

" Nous voilà donc dans la minorité. Entendez-vous ? eh ? "—
WALPOLE'S *Letters*.

No man suffers by *bad* fortune, but he who has been deceived by *good*. If we grow fond of her gifts, fancy that they belong to us and are perpetually to remain with us, if we look upon and expect to be considered for them as our own, we shall sink into the bitterness of grief, as soon as these transitory benefits pass away.—LORD BOLINGBROKE.

SPICER might be a very knowing compounder of saline draughts; but he knew no more than Galen of such disorders as that under which Mrs. Hamilton was suffering. The few days he had announced as the period of her recovery, elapsed; and there she still lay, on her bed of sickness. When the grand event of the 15th of November arrived, Susan was in a state of mental and bodily prostration, which prevented her from even learning that the Whigs were in office and the Tories in opposition; or, (which was of more importance in Spring Gardens,) that Lord Laxington was a pensioner of government, instead of a place-man. It was not till many days afterwards, that Mrs. Wheeler, during the absence of Augustus, dolorously apprised her of the fact.

" Thank Heaven ! We shall now leave town ! "

ejaculated the invalid. But Wheeler, who had looked forward with confidence to ending her days in easy independence, as housekeeper at the Custom-house or laundress at Chelsea Hospital, and was all indignation at her own disappointment, was by no means inclined to echo the pious ejaculation.

"I don't hear no talk of going into the country, ma'am," said she. "It is Mr. Dawkins's intention to send in his resignation, when my lord goes for permanence into the country; and when he was discussing of it, last night in the steward's room, he said there was no fear yet awhile."

Mrs. Hamilton sighed heavily.

"To be sure, times is sadly changed with us, ma'am!" observed Wheeler, with a responsive sigh. "Since you have been indisposed, ma'am, instead of the heap of names as *used* to be in the porter's book, whenever any thing or nothing was amiss, not a soul have we had but poor Mrs. Forbes (whom my master gave orders shouldn't be admitted), and them Cadogans, as have been so long a making up to my lord, in hopes of getting a peerage (Cadogan's people don't scruple to say so!) And there's the Shetlands scudding away out of Downing Street, like poor folks shifting lodgings at Bartlemy tide; and the Baldocks quitting the Admiralty, as if the constable were at their heels; and my Lord Tottenham, and all. Dearee me! it's enough to make one sick of politics, to see such ups and downs; and them as thought themselves masters and more, so down in the mouth."

"Has Mrs. Tottenham been here lately, Wheeler?" inquired Susan, desirous to silence her familiarity.

"I don't know, ma'am," replied the waiting-woman, with a significant smile.

"Inquire of the porter," persisted her mistress.

"There's no need for that, ma'am."

"What do you mean, Wheeler?—Is any thing the matter in Brook Street?"

"Nothing particular, ma'am. Only there've been some words, I understand, between my lord and Mr. Tottenham, and they're not so well together as they *have* been. It *is* said, ma'am, in the steward's room, that even Mr. Hamilton and my lord are not quite upon velvet. They're all pretty much out of sorts; and no wonder! It isn't so pleasant to be turned out of one's place, without saying with your leave nor by your leave; and Shetland's people who thought the ground not good enough to walk upon, and looked upon themselves as good as purvided for, who —"

"*That* will do, Wheeler," said the invalid, eager, her toilet being completed, to dismiss her voluble companion; when, just as she had thrown herself on the sofa of her dressing-room, a knock at the door, and a voice requesting admission, startled her with the apprehension that Augustus, whom she had not yet seen alone, was come to visit her. It was an agreeable surprise when Lord Laxington made his appearance, and took his seat by her side.

"My dear Susan," said he, as she half rose to offer him her hand. "I fear, by your looks, that your illness has been more than a common cold."

Mrs. Hamilton, nervous as she was, could not prevent tears from rising in her eyes.

"You are taking this *contre temps* too much to heart," he continued, attributing her agitation to the disastrous change of affairs in his family. "Rely upon it, things cannot last as they are. We have every hope that, before the re-assembling of parliament, all will be right again. The first popular question brought forward *must* turn these people out. It

is not in the power of any ministry to redeem the rash pledges they have given to the country."

"I rejoice that you should feel satisfied on the subject," replied Mrs. Hamilton, pleased to find her emotions so completely misconstrued. "But surely you would be happier in a release from the cares of public life? For years, you have scarcely had a moment at your own disposal; and were you to retire for a year or two into the country ——"

"The country!" interrupted Lord Laxington. "You forget, my dear, the impossibility of abandoning, at such a crisis, the party to which I am so largely indebted. Even were they strong enough to dispense with my services, I am afraid the excitement and occupation of public life have somewhat unfitted me for country pleasures."

"The Continent, then. You seemed so much to enjoy yourself abroad!"

"I enjoyed the dignities derived from my public capacity, and the honourable reception it insured my family in foreign courts. To reside as an humble individual in Paris or at Naples, is not exactly the same thing as to appear at the court of France as an envoy from its most potent enemy or ally. Besides," continued he, attempting to smile, "what would *you* say to me, were I to tear you from London, and all your friends and admirers?"

"Do not consider *me*!" said Susan, earnestly. "I am willing,—*more* than willing—*eager*, to go wherever you are likely to be happiest. In quitting London, you would consult my inclinations even more than your own convenience. Wherever you go, I trust you will allow me to be your companion?" she continued, looking beseechingly at her astonished father-in-law. "You have only to dictate in what

manner I can best administer to your comfort and happiness. You will not find me disobedient or ungrateful."

Lord Laxington could not immediately reply. He was no less amazed than deeply touched by expressions of kindness, for which the conduct of his own son and daughter, in his reverse of fortune, had not prepared him. In a moment, he felt that Susan, whose meek submission to her husband and blindness in the Cadogan affair, had often tempted him to tax with meanness of spirit, had not hitherto received justice at his hands.

"I thank you!" said he at length, pressing her hand more affectionately than he had ever done since she became the wife of his son. "It is a consoling thing to have found friends where I least anticipated, and perhaps least deserved them. Claneustace has been with me to-day; and acted the part I had a better right to expect from my son. From Augustus I have heard nothing but murmurs and reproaches. As to Julia ——"

"Let us make some allowance for a moment of vexation and disappointment, which they may have felt as much on your account as their own," said Susan, gently: unwilling to be made the confidante of his lordship's displeasure against his children.

"On *my* account?" reiterated he, with indignation. "No! It was only of their own interests they spoke; accusing me of selfish ambition in the acquirement of a peerage, at one time so dear an object to their wishes! I have learned many useful lessons, my dear Susan, within the last fortnight. That rascal Varden writes to insult me for having decoyed him from his professional practice, in order to thrust him into an unprofitable and precarious secretaryship;

while my children upbraid me for having reared them in habits of folly and indulgence which I have not the means to gratify. Julia and her fool of a husband are ruined : but was the match one of *my* making ? Augustus has nothing ; but he knew the risks in store for him.” Lord Laxington paused ; then quickly added, “But no ! in *that* he judged more wisely than myself. Lady Ashley would not have come forward to me in my misfortunes, as *you* have done.”

His change of countenance avouched his sincerity.

“And do you, then, intend to remain in this house ?” inquired Mrs. Hamilton, wishing to give a new turn to the conversation.

“At present. We must make no changes that look like defeat. Some months hence, if, unfortunately, our prospects are not amended, this house and Weald must be given up.”

Susan’s countenance brightened.

“I shall reside at an hotel during the sitting of parliament ; and Augustus and yourself at Mayfield, which Claneustace has forced upon my acceptance.”

Poor Mrs. Hamilton ! A little month ago, what happy prospects would such a plan have unfolded to her imagination ! But to live, in intimate country companionship, with the father of Mrs. Cadogan’s child ; with the bold, yet pitiful, Augustus ! To become the butt of his *ennui* — the victim of his ill-concealed disgust ! — Impossible.

“However,” continued Lord Laxington, reassuming his usual tone of recklessness, as if apprehensive he had been too candid in exposing the seriousness of his apprehensions, “there is no occasion, at present, to build castles in which we may never have occasion to fix our residence. In a few weeks, we shall be holding our heads higher than we have held them yet.

Meanwhile, dear Susan, get well as fast as you can ; and look pretty and gay, and appear as much as possible in society. I must not have the world suppose that a daughter of mine has taken too much to heart the loss of a few thousands a year."

Susan coloured deeply. *She* knew that, were every thousand thus forfeited a million, its loss would never have occasioned her the loss of an hour's rest or a moment's peace of mind.

" You have not seen much of Augustus, lately ? " he continued, watching her countenance.

" I have seen *much* of *no* one," was her evasive reply. " As Mr. Spicer prescribes perfect quiet, I have declined admitting visitors. The shock I received on the day of the city dinner —"

" Very true, very true ! Urgent business makes me forget every thing ! And, on the whole, perhaps it has been better for you not to be much in his company in your present weak state. My son is one of those who are misjudging enough to regard the recent changes as an injury, and resent them with violence. As if the King were not at liberty to choose his servants ! As if the country were not at liberty to express approval or disapproval of his choice ! "

" I am happy to see *you* so temperate on the subject," replied Susan, suspecting, and with reason, that his secret feelings coincided with those of his son. " We shall pass the Christmas holidays, I conclude, at Brighton ? "

" For *what* ? " cried Lord Laxington, hastily. " Now that our resignation has been accepted " (Susan knew not that it had been even tendered, — so much were the Hamilton family accustomed to treat her as a non-entity !) " we have nothing to do at Brighton. No, my dear, I go to Weald the moment

parliament is prorogued. Weald is a central place of rendezvous for our friends ; and Lord Shetland, and most of my colleagues, will meet me there. By that time, Susan, you must manage to recover your spirits. You are fond of Northamptonshire ; and will be quite yourself the moment you get into the country.”

CHAP. XLIV.

L'amour propre est comme les enfans, qui tombent sans pleurer, pourvu qu'on ne les regarde pas. Une publicité de malheur est autre chose. — GROUVELLE.

THE opinion previously formed by Mrs. Hamilton, that it is easier to bear with dignity the burthen of office, than with dignity to lay it down, was very shortly confirmed. So soon as she was sufficiently recovered to be under the necessity of reappearing in Lord Laxington’s circle (and it was less painful to be in company with her husband than receive his visits in her dressing-room), she observed, with no less disgust than amazement, the vulgarity of meanness with which persons moving in the highest rank of life, fought and squabbled among themselves concerning the extent and nature of their sacrifices ; and clung, in the face of the whole country, to every shred and patch of their dismembered robes of state. Small, indeed, was the number of those who comported themselves as if they looked on place as a mere medium of service to the country. There *were* such, however. One or two had the sense to adjust their mantles and fall with decency ; principally, because they were sanguine of speedy reestablishment in their lost ascendancy.

Meanwhile, the generous public was not sparing of

its sarcasms ; and the coteries (perched like jackdaws on the top of the tree, and fancying mere elevation a source of dignity !) chattered more loudly than ever.

“ What a fool Matthewson has been, not to secure his peerage ! ” cried one of the idlers assembled round the Duchess of Ptarmigan’s fireside, early in the Christmas holidays. “ By making himself so deuced useful in the Lower House, his party is kicked out of office before they found it convenient to bench him in the House of Incurables ! ”

“ They hesitated about a peerage to Matthewson,” sneered another, “ who *has* some thousands a year to contribute towards the pomps and vanities of the Order ; and gave one to Hamilton, who never had a guinea, save of government money, in his pocket, since he wore a coat.”

“ Ay, because our friend Laxington asked for a coronet, only as a gewgaw to barter for what Harpagon calls ‘ the tangible.’ He was in hopes it would secure Lady Ashley for his son, and justify his daughter as a marchioness. Poor Laxington ! — Laxington is one of those long-sighted people, who are always stumbling over mole-hills.”

“ And Augustus Hamilton, too—’Pon my honour, Gussy has been making a confounded ass of himself ; or, rather, has let others make him one. To those Cadogans, he has been a mere cat’s paw to reach Lord Shetland, for the revival of that old Barony which they swear was in the family six hundred years before the flood.”

“ And for such a set of people has this country been nearly revolutionized ! ” observed one who had long been in the habit of dining among them three days in the week.

“ Leighton, I see, sticks to his place ! ”

“ Why not ? As her ladyship says, ‘ Sir Joseph has *no* principles ! ’ If he had, his place is not a political one. Lady L. was always a great ally of Claneustace ; and Claneustace, I fancy, has spoken a good word for her to Lord Grey.”

“ Lucky that one person in the world is so inclined. Eardley, I understand, has made over his property to his tailor ; and is to live on an annuity, at some village in Normandy. How he has been able to carry on the war so long, is a marvel to every body. Clarence has done better for himself. *He* is going to marry the daughter of the new man they talk of for the Board of Trade, — Burtonshaw.”

“ The man who spoke so finely the other night ? ”

“ Exactly ! — One of the most rising men of the day ! ”

“ Just what we were saying last year of Jack Tottenham ! — And where is *he* to end now ? ”

“ In the Rules, — I suppose — *selon les règles* ! ”

“ And so will his brother William, if these people carry the Reform Bill. Poor Lord Tottenham ! — To have four worthless sons returned insolvent upon his hands : and soon, not a borough left to cover their multitude of sins ! ”

“ William’s marriage has not done much for him ! ”

“ I beg your pardon, it has done him *up* ! People talk of the folly of intermarriages in families. What is it to the folly of intermarriages in parties ? — If Billy Tot. had thrown himself away on a Miss Burtonshaw, he might have kept his place.”

“ And his place would have kept *him* ; which is more than he has to expect from either father or father-in-law.”

But it was not the insolence of such foes as these that could deepen the gloom overspreading the destinies

of Susan Hamilton. So long as she continued to trust in her husband's affection, she remained insensible to the uncongeniality of the persons and things by whom she was surrounded, and had made to herself a haven of happiness in the sunshine of her innocent heart. But the bitterness of her experience in human treachery had left her no rock of trust whereon to anchor. The chain that linked her with the world, was broken by the same blow which had rent the veil of the domestic sanctuary "where she had garnered up her heart."—The hollow intercourse between herself and her family, created by the necessity for concealment, marred even her pleasure in their presence. Nor could she bear to darken the bright and prosperous home of Marcia,—of Marcia who had so warned and so upbraided her,—with the spectacle of her mournful face. Sir Edward Berkely was with his regiment in Ireland;—her mother peevish, complaining, and absorbed in increasing infirmities.—To whom, alas! to whom, could she turn for a word of solace?—

She heard nothing but murmurs, she saw nothing but consternation. Instead of the gratitude heretofore heaped upon Lord Laxington, he was reviled as the enemy of his country; and, for every former blessing, was rendered him a curse. Even the servants of the establishment did their spiriting rudely.—The tradesmen were negligent,—the world was forgetful. No crush of carriages at the door; no importunate invitations; no officious visits; no entreaties for the honour of her patronage; no rhapsodies in the servile papers respecting the beauty and elegance of the all-accomplished Mrs. Hamilton! Every thing connected with that name was in the minority; offensive to the ear of the people; and distasteful to the eye of that feeble, tawdry, giggling jade, called Fashion. The

coteries observed that Mrs. Hamilton was looking like a ghost; while the circle of her more immediate acquaintance added, that they had given poor dear Mrs. Hamilton credit for a better-regulated mind.

Meanwhile, although darkness was over the house of Lord Laxington, and despair in the hearts of his associates, a promise of redemption from captivity had been pledged to the people of England, which called forth triumph and rejoicing from one end of the kingdom to the other! The very name of "Reform" contained a cabalistic spell for the ears and hearts of the populace. The benefits imputed to the mysterious concession were illimitable. The *very* poor conceived that it would whitewash their cottages, convert their hard crusts into roast beef and their well-water into XX.; while the equally unenlightened, of better worldly means, conjectured that it implied the extinction of such unpopular agents as tax-gatherers, excisemen, and the new police. They had been too long accustomed to swallow the nostrums of charlatans, not to expect miracles from the wholesome medicaments of the physician.

The clear-sighted, who regarded this sweeping away of the dust and cobwebs collected by the lapse of ages in the stupendous machinery of the state, as enabling it to move with greater ease and security in whatever direction it might be impelled by the policy of those to whom its direction would be entrusted, accepted the benefit with satisfaction; but rather as the payment of a debt, long delayed, than as a ministerial benefaction. The stagnant pond was cleared of its mud; the waters it might hereafter contain, were yet to be analyzed.

Still, there was something in the wild hilarity of the people, peculiarly offensive to the ears of the ejected

party. The tumults of a general election conveyed insults and defiance to more than one spoiled child of fortune, hitherto accustomed only to the pæans and plaudits which surround the triumphal car of the victorious. For John Bull (so far from being the generous foe he is wont to assume himself) is, in fact, as apt to kick a man when he's down ("by the fist of my fathers I blush for thee, Ben !") as his Gallic neighbour, who spat in the face of the captive Louis Seize, hooted the abdicating Napoleon, and would fain have lapidated the exiled Charles the Tenth. Not satisfied with breaking the windows of their now undified idols, they showed considerable inclination to break their heads ; and nothing but the noble self-possession exhibited on public occasions by several leading members of the Tory party, succeeded in disarming the malignant feelings of the mob. In every great national crisis, false prophets arise to delude the people, and injure the good cause. But it is difficult to misguide, for any length of time, the public mind. When the storm is over, opinion subsides into its natural channel ; and, as is finely said by a French writer, "*Les nations ne doivent leur énergie qu'à de grands sentimens.*"

It afforded, however, a considerable source of aggravation to the mortification of the Tories, that the new party, which it had announced as a gang of democrats intent on overturning the ancient institutions of the country, should be at once recognised as forming a nucleus of all that was venerable in descent or devoted to the maintenance of social order. There could be no pretence for supposing that men possessed of the mighty stake in the country, vested in the families of Grosvenor, Cavendish, Russell, Wentworth, or Lambton, would wantonly endanger the stability of a constitution on which the fortunes of their houses

leant for security. A party so highly aristocratic as the ministry of Lord Grey had, in fact, seldom dignified the annals of government ; and the outcries of the Baldocks and Tottenhams, disseminated by the puny echoes of the Vardens and their kind, were speedily drowned in the high announcements and lofty style of the personages surrounding the throne. On the meeting of parliament, the Court was more brilliant than ever ; and the prolonged debates upon the Reform Bill imparted to the summer and autumn the brilliancy of a double season.

That summer of 1831 presented, in fact, a curious epoch in the history of London society. All was activity, all was expectation. Triumphant as were the Whigs, the Tories were still sanguine of success ; while a third party, small, but powerful in energy and compactness, was silently forming in the back ground.

— A general emancipation appeared to have taken place.—People seemed to fancy that, since such wondrous revolutions of opinion had occurred in the most momentous departments, without shame or blame, *they* might be permitted to throw off long-standing prejudices and mental subservience. Literature, the arts, nay, even the forms of society, underwent a modification. The Quarterly Review no longer afforded to the intellectual world a table of the law. Almack's, the fourth estate of fashion, was shaken to its basis. Was it possible still to exclude from the benefit of its saving grace, such individuals as the Burtonshaws,—the head of the family being a man whom the king delighted to honour ? Or could the august conclave reject Lady Leighton's officious and unauthorised mediation in favour of the beautiful Mrs. Forbes, when nothing but the learned wig of Brougham interposed between her husband and the woolsack ? A few solemn dow-

agers, of the William-the-Conqueror school, still held off, and bridled indignantly in their buckram. But the majority of High Mightinesses were too busy with their coronation robes, and the precedence of the approaching ceremonial at Westminster, to note inch by inch, curtsey by curtsey, the abrogation of their privileges of caste.

It was only the defeated foe which still kept up, at intervals, alarums of consternation ; as if to remind the terrorists that their citadel was in danger, and their constabulary force in order of battle. The Jack Tottenhams, who had lost their seat, and the William Tottenhams, who had lost their five-guinea whist ; — the Vardens, who, like Michael Angelo's statue of snow, had melted from sublimity into rain-water ; — the Ballocks, who were now unprofitable as a last year's almanack ; — besides the innumerable swarms of ephemeral insects so brilliant while buoyant in the sunshine, but creating a pestilence the moment they fall to the ground, — chose, since they could be nothing else, to be alarmists. But they were alarmists who created no alarm, unless in such slender minds as those of the venerable Mrs. Mangles, and Pen. Smith.

Revolution,—that “ word of fear, displeasing to a noble ear,” had ceased to excite consternation. England saw itself self-secure in the mightiness of its civilisation ; — in the triumph of opinion over brute force. That glorious spirit of enlightenment, (at once a source of wealth and aggrandisement to the empire, and the protection of the wealth and aggrandisement so created,) which affords to Great Britain a dignity in the eyes of Europe and in the pages of history, such as her insular position alone prevents her from converting into an omnipotent influence over the manners and customs of her contemporaries, could not

but prove a safeguard to the wholesome and uncorrupted portion of her institutions. The country was its own defence. It was soon seen that, although the pinnacles of the temple might have decayed in excess of sunshine, the foundations, the walls, and rafters were as solid as before.

Little had Susan Hamilton imagined that she should ever learn to rejoice in the vehemence of the political discussions which now distracted the counsels of Lord Laxington and his guests. She, who in her girlhood used to tremble with alarm whenever her mother raised her voice to reprehend the rebellious Marcia, or overthrow the assumptions of Pen. Smith, was *now* almost pleased at the warmth of debate which absorbed from herself the attention of her husband and his father. She was not blind enough to suppose that Augustus was really unobservant of her. But it was enough that he had a pretext for fixing his observation elsewhere. Nothing she dreaded so much as an explanation! —

It was not, in fact, in the nature of things, for Augustus Hamilton to be insensible to the change that had taken place in Susan's sentiments and demeanour towards him; and, while he affected to ascribe the alteration in her health and looks to the mortification arising from her change of worldly prospects, the man of the world was not slow in attributing all to its true origin. The abstraction of her manner, the sadness of her face, the hoarse, yet plaintive tones of her broken voice, proclaimed the disappointments of her heart; and he almost hated her for the forbearance which induced her to keep silence under such emotions. He wished her to burst forth into accusation. He was conscious of having used her too ill not to wish to wreak further vengeance on her head. He persuaded

himself he had a right to recriminate ; to urge against her his former backwardness in proposing a marriage which he had pre-discovered would be a source of misery to both ; to charge her with indifference and neglect, in having failed to assimilate her habits and tastes to his own ; to reproach her with having adopted his mode of life as a task, and trifled with dignities transcendent in his eyes. Often, after involuntarily contemplating her grave face, and thrilling under her accusing silence, he burned to tell her it was by a wife-like sympathy of taste, and higher energies of character, that Caroline had obtained and kept her dominion over his heart.

But, as we have already quoted from Machiavel, “ few men have courage to be altogether bad, or altogether good ; ” and there *were* moments when Susan’s loveliness and gentleness, and grace and goodness, had their revenge, by rousing a better spirit in her husband. A man must live in the enjoyment of high prosperity, who can find fault with equanimity of temper in his wife ; and Hamilton was now too much thwarted by public mortifications, too much harassed by his creditors, too much tormented by his friends, and, above all, too deeply wounded by the worship tendered by the Cadogans to the rising star of the ascendant party, not to admit, at times, that a soft voice, gentle deportment, and uncomplaining spirit, are, after all, precious endowments in the wife of one’s fireside ! If he came home distempered and morose, to insult his father with surly answers and swear at the servants, it was something that, though Susan no longer flew to the door to welcome him, she neither remonstrated with his intemperance, nor joined in the indignant rejoinders of Lord Laxington.

Had any evidence been wanting, meanwhile, of her perfect cognizance of his misdoings, the guilty husband

must have found it in her conduct towards Mrs. Cadogan. *There* she had been firm. From the moment of her return to town after the holidays, Susan had neither entered Caroline's house, nor admitted her into her own. She had even, as far as possible, avoided meeting her under the roof of a third person. But they *had* come into occasional collision amid the throngs of the great world ; where the deadly paleness that overspread her face, and the dignity which suddenly elevated her person, in the encounter, revealed in a moment to Caroline that her secret was at the mercy of her rival. To propitiate the enemy created by her treachery, appeared an impossible task, even to Mrs. Cadogan's genius for cajolement. To *resent* her enmity was no less impossible. The only manœuvre, therefore, that remained, was to turn upon her with irony ; to affect to look upon poor, dear Mrs. Hamilton, as an amiable, feeble, nervous, fanciful creature ; wonder what new chimera had got into her head ; and express a pitying hope that some day or other, when the effects of her recent disappointments had subsided, she would return to a more reasonable frame of mind.

The larger half of the world, caring little for either of them, listened and bowed assentingly ; while a select few of the initiated were of opinion that Mrs. Hamilton, who had been an inmate of royal cottages, and a Woman of the Bedchamber, ought to know more of the world than bring such awkward subjects under discussion. Besides, Mrs. Cadogan could not but be in the right.—She was such a favourite in the new Downing Street!—The barony of Everleigh was on the eve of being restored !—Mrs. Cadogan could not be to blame ! —

CHAP. XLV.

On ne méprise pas tous ceux qui ont des vices ; mais on méprise eux qui n'ont aucune vertu. — LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

MISERABLE as was the tenor of Susan's life, her husband's was fiftyfold more pitiable. He was an ambitious man, and his pride had been humbled in the dust ; he was a prodigal, and his sources of wealth were cut off ; he was a libertine, and saw his homage becoming importunate where it had once been courted ; he was a husband, and found himself an object of abhorrence to one towards whom the usances of society compelled him to exhibit the courtesies of married life.

No longer the spoiled child of the clubs, where his flippancy had been recorded as wit, and his insolence tolerated as eccentricity, so long as he had money and credit to back some extravagant bet, it was whispered that he had debts of honour both unpaid and unpayable. Men began to take off their hats to him, who had once passed him with a friendly nod ; while others passed him with a familiar nod, who had once stood respectfully uncovered in his presence. He had no fund of personal respectability on which to draw, in the failure of his worldly fortunes. Time had been, that his acquaintance was a stepping-stone to preferment ; that he was the influencer of the influential ; the bird that carried whispers of what was passing in the world, even into the King's chamber. But now, there was a long farewell to all his greatness ! Even *he* could not remain blind to the fact

that he was good for no other purpose than to form a lay-figure in the gaudy pageant of aristocratic life. He knew nothing. He could do no single thing towards advancing the great purposes of existence. He was useless to a fallen party;—was no orator;—had neither wit for attack, nor wisdom for defence! And such was the man who had presumed to despise,—to insult,—to trample on others; assuming the pride of the serpent, when he was, in truth, the weakest of worms!

He saw the Shetlands and Baldocks retain their high position in the world. Even his own father commanded the respect of parliament, and a certain degree of toleration in the country. For Lord Lexington happened to be one of those who *had* worked for government, as well as received its wages; and it was conceived,—falsely or not,—that his present poverty was a sufficient attestation of his disinterestedness during a long continuance in office. By dint of much tact and practice, too, he had become an able and popular speaker. Like the late Lord Liverpool, his arguments were addressed to the ear of the country rather than that of the House; and, as he was the most temperate and statesmanlike, he was, of course, the least obnoxious of the Tory leaders. Lord Lexington did not share the shame of the do-nothings and crave-alls: and the world knew better than to treat *him* as it treated his son.

But the unkindest cut of all those directed against the callous heart of Augustus Hamilton, was the conduct of Mrs. Cadogan! Although he would, probably, had his golden career continued, have replaced her in his affections by some fairer or newer idol, he could not pardon her for having quitted *him*. There was something in the audacity of coolness with which she

now affected to hold him at bay, which roused all his indignation. He, who had never experienced a generous emotion, exacted the utmost devotion from the woman he both despised and had rendered despicable. He even taxed her with the meanness of her defalcation ; and, without a blush, she reproached him with want of *savoir vivre*. She could hardly conceive how a man, who had lived so much in the world, could exhibit such a total *manque d'usage* ! And away she glided, before his face, to shower smiles upon a Secretary of State, and exchange nothings with a new lord of the Treasury ! —

At such moments,—and they recurred more than once during the progress of that long-lingered season,—Susan's triumph was great. Willingly would Hamilton have dragged himself to her feet, and implored her to forgive him, or at least to believe his punishment sufficient for his offence. He stood sometimes watching his wife from the pit at the Opera, as she leaned back in her box (in compliance with Lord Laxingtons' desire for her constant appearance in public), pale, marble-like, beautiful ; without a smile, without a hope, like a spring whose flowers have been withered by untimely frost, till his heart melted within him. *She* would not have deserted him in his adversity ! But for his treachery, that pure and womanly creature would have been still, and more than ever, his own ! —

Nor, though his passion for Mrs. Cadogan had now assumed the bitterness of hatred, was he by any means secure from the perils of exposure. If there had been no confidante, there had been a cunning observer of their intimacy, whose secrecy had been dearly bought ; a man of bad character, who sought in the infamy of others a safeguard from the consequences

of his own. He had been appeased with money, — he had been appeased with patronage, — so long as Augustus Hamilton had money or patronage to bestow. But Hamilton suspected that intercepted letters were still retained in his hands as instruments of mischief.

Mrs. Cadogan, who knew no more of these circumstances than that Watts, her former butler, had been provided for by Augustus Hamilton by a place in the Customs, treated with scorn the insinuations occasionally dropped on the subject by her former lover. She was persuaded that Hamilton's object was to intimidate and molest her ; and, eager to evade all communication with him on a subject so humiliating, refused to listen to her partner in guilt, when, one evening as she was quitting her box at one of the summer theatres, he whispered that the misdemeanours of Watts had caused him to be suspended from his appointment ; and, that it was essential *her* interest should be exerted to procure his re-instatement ; and, in the sequel, Augustus was compelled to solicit, in favour of their common enemy, the influence of a personal acquaintance, towards whom, as a political opponent, he was conscious of the indelicacy of the demand.

Unluckily for all parties, the man, whom drunkenness had incapacitated for the discharge of his duties, was tempted to boast among his former colleagues the origin of his interest ; and, on his re-instatement, the whole history, accompanied by pertinent comments, was communicated, by a disappointed brother clerk who had expected to become his successor, to a weekly paper. An official inquiry was instituted into the circumstances of the case. The misdemeanours of Watts were established, his declarations attested, and his dismissal publicly announced, by the journal whose comments originated the inves-

tigation. Nor, however cautious in Mr. Cadogan's presence the gossipers of his club, was it possible that a man, the material affair of whose morning was the perusal of the newspapers (to ascertain how far himself and his impending barony engrossed the attention of the public), should escape the vexatious information afforded by the public journals.

Even a tortoise has its unguarded part ; and the world-hardened Cadogan was fated to suffer tortures from this exposure to the scoffs and sneers of society. His heart indeed was invulnerable ; but his *pride!* —

His resolution was soon taken. The moment the honour of a "gentlemanly man" becomes impaired, he places it in the hands of "a friend," just as, were an eye injured, he would confide it to an oculist ; and the active and energetic friend he happened to select, made it his business to seek out Watts ; and, by the aid of a fifty pound note, place Mr. Cadogan in possession of facts, which he would have given half his fortune to prove untrue.

So suddenly was the mystery unravelled, that Hamilton was still deliberating in what way to secure the discretion of his confederate, and prevent tidings of the affair from reaching the ears of his wife, when Mrs. Cadogan, (while occupied in deep consultation with her new friend, Mrs. Burtonshaw, on the comparative merits of gold lace or blonde for the fraise of her peeress's robes at the approaching coronation,) received a legal mandate, which exiled her for ever from the roof of her husband ; severed her from the companionship of her sex, the society of her daughters ; and unveiled to the sneers and abhorrence of society, one of the most specious of its hypocrites. She had no time for remonstrance, — no time for appeal, — no time for even a communication with her partner in guilt.

Mr. Cadogan's solicitor informed her that a carriage was at the door to convey her to her mother's residence in Northamptonshire ; and that prompt obedience to the suggestion would afford her the best chance of meriting future forbearance on the part of her indignant husband.

CHAP. XLVI.

Dès que le désespoir peut retrouver des larmes,
A la mélancolie il vient les confier,
Pour adoucir sa peine, et non pour l'oublier !

DELILLE.

ONE soft evening in August, Susan Hamilton, in total ignorance of the catastrophe of the day, was sitting alone beside her dressing-room window ; lulled by the distant murmurs of children at play in the park ; and musing over a book by which she had been vainly attempting to divert her attention from the anxious thoughts gradually becoming a part of her existence.

She had dined *tête-à-tête* with Lord Laxington, who was gone down to the House ; and congratulated herself that he had sanctioned her refusal to join a water party formed by the Baldocks to pass the day at Richmond, — an arrangement which left her secure from interruption from their pleasure-loving *clique*. Emancipated from the false glare that serves to kindle the false excitements of society, Susan sat soothing herself by that vague and dreamy contemplation of the sky, which forms so ready a solace to the unhappy ; — the sky which shields beneath its common

roof so many of our brethren in affliction, — so many who were once afflicted, and are at rest.

But her meditations were suddenly interrupted by approaching footsteps ; and, before she had time to regret the intrusion, her cheeks tingled with a sudden flush on observing that it was her husband who had entered the room. Some months had elapsed since Augustus approached at such an hour ; and the surprise caused her to half-arise from her chair, as if receiving a stranger.

“ Do not let me disturb you,” said he, advancing towards the window, and speaking in a tone of voice which assured her that, whatever might be the motive of his visit, it was not of an offensive nature.

“ You have returned early from Richmond ? ” she observed, unwilling that he should notice her surprise. “ I understood you were to come back with the tide, by moonlight ; and that you had the band of the Life-Guards ? ”

“ I have not been to Richmond. I detest water-parties.”

“ As there is so little doing in town, I thought you might be tempted.”

“ No ! When there is little doing in town, what *is* done, is always done badly. People grow tired of each other, — have nothing to say, — and what they invent is little to the purpose.”

Susan could almost have smiled to perceive that *they*, too, were beginning to invent conversation for each other.

“ I am come to wish you good-bye,” observed Augustus, abruptly. “ I am going out of town early tomorrow morning, — for a week, — perhaps longer. Is there any thing you wish me to do for you, previous to my departure ? ”

Mrs. Hamilton, still more amazed by this unusual ceremony, replied by inquiring whither he was going ; — “ to Weald, — to Brighton, — or to Mayfield ?”

“ To neither. I am not very well. — These committee-hours are too much for me. I have a certificate for a fortnight’s absence, and intend to make a tour ; — perhaps to the Isle of Wight. I have not yet determined.”

It suddenly occurred to Susan that he was desirous she should accompany him ; an apprehension that suggested greater reserve.

“ Change of air will probably be of use to you,” said she, calmly. “ You are fortunate in being able to get away. I wish you a pleasant journey.”

“ You have not replied to my question ?” resumed Augustus, undismayed by her coldness. “ Can I do any thing for you before I leave home ? — Would you like to visit Green-Oak while I am away ? — Would you like to go to Mayfield ?”

“ Thank you. I have promised Lord Laxington to remain with him till parliament is up. I have no wish to quit London.”

Instead of being affronted by this definitive answer, Augustus took a chair ; and sat down so near her, on pretence of admiring, from the window, the beauty of the night, that she began to wish herself at Richmond. She feared he was going to proceed to an explanation ; instead of which, to her indescribable amazement, he suddenly burst into an eulogium of Bernard Forbes ! — Forbes had made an eloquent speech on the Reform Question, the preceding night. But her husband was certainly the last person in London from whom she had expected its praises.

“ I believe Forbes to be a highly honourable man,” said Hamilton. “ He is the only member of his party

who has acted consistently with his principles ; and, wholly as they differ from mine, I respect them as manly and disinterested. He is an honourable man in public, and an honest man in private life. I have often done Forbes injustice. But he has a sincere regard for *you*, Susan ;— and if, under any circumstances, you should ever want a friend or adviser, you could not be better provided."

What *could* be the meaning of such a preamble ! Was he come to propose a separation, or was he going abroad, instead of to the Isle of Wight ? She was mistaken, perhaps, in supposing that a coolness existed between him and Mrs. Cadogan. They were, perhaps, on the eve of an elopement ! The word *divorce* next presented itself to Susan's imagination. After all, she might be fated to undergo the humiliation of a public exposure of her grievances. After all, he had resolved to alienate from her the slight tenure upon him she possessed in the empty name of wife !

"I apprehend no want of friends or counsellors," said she, as soon as she could command firmness of voice. "My brother has a better head than his volatility gains him credit for ; his *heart* needs no advocate."

"Berkely is absent," observed Mr. Hamilton ; unconsciously confirming her belief that the crisis of her fate was approaching. Then, as if apprehensive that he might excite her solicitude, he added : "His professional duties too often call him away from town. Forbes is always on the spot. But even during his absence, Susan, you are sure of a friend in my father. He appreciates you as you deserve. He loves you better than either son or daughter of his own !" —

Mrs. Hamilton's heart thrilled within her ! How

long since she had gathered such expressions — such allusions — from the lips of her husband! Yet she dared not welcome them. She had learned to mistrust, on his part, every pretence of courtesy or kindness, as the prelude, or screen, to some treacherous act.

“ And now, let me wish you good bye,” he continued; having unnerved his own feelings far more than hers, by this reference to her excellence. He extended his hand towards her; and Susan’s trembled, as she accepted the pledge of parting. But not with a softened heart. Persuaded that he was on the point of quitting her for ever, in order to become the companion of Caroline Cadogan, her spirit rebelled against this hollow show of repentance. She saw him on the eve of violating in the face of man, as he had already violated in the eye of God, the marriage vow which made him her own; and loathed the hypocritical attempt to cast her off with an affectation of reluctance.

“ As we may not meet again for some time,” he persisted, little suspecting what harsh fancies had taken possession of that gentle bosom,—“ one kiss, Susan,— that we may at least part in kindness !”

But, as he bent towards her, Mrs. Hamilton recoiled; and, leaning for support against the window frame, her cheeks flushed,—her delicate figure, proudly erect, though trembling with emotion,—she exclaimed, in a voice such as he had never yet heard from her lips,—“ Never! You have injured and insulted me by every means in your power. But my own self-respect shall secure me from the pollution of your caresses.”

Startled into silence, Hamilton was not wholly disengaged by this burst of indignation; and, without renewing his request, he was about to renew his advances; when his wife, uplifting her hand to interdict

his approach, exclaimed almost frantically, and with one foot advanced upon the balcony of the open window,—“ I would sooner throw myself upon the stones below, than receive from you the slightest token of tenderness.”

“ As you please ! ” said he, vexed into the resumption of his usual petulance. “ But there is no occasion for so much heroism. You have nothing to apprehend. I am no enterprising Knight Templar ; nor is St. James’s Park a fitting site for the exploits of Front de Bœuf’s castle. I came here in kindness. If I quit you with renewed enmity, remember, it is of your own creating. Good night ! ”—

Already, the handle of the door was turning in his hand for departure ; and Susan was half inclined to recall him,—to soften what she had said,—to listen to what he might have to say. He even paused, for a moment, as if in expectation of some such act of grace. But the effort was too much for her. She had sunk into a chair, and her heart was beating as if it would burst. But, as she uttered not a word, nothing remained for him but to pursue his way. The door closed upon him ;—she heard his departing footsteps. In another moment, she heard nothing but the painful pulsation of her temples, her bosom, her whole frame.

CHAP. XLVII.

Oh ! what portents are these ?
Some heavy business hath my lord in hand,
And I must know it !

Henry IV. Part I.

IT was some time before Mrs. Hamilton recovered the control of her faculties ; some time before the burning flush upon her cheeks subsided, and she could calmly reconsider the past. There was evidently a mystery ; — Augustus was certainly in earnest. He was not heated by wine. He had been consistent, mild, reasonable ; more like his better self than she had seen him for years. What could it mean ? Had she done wrong in rejecting his penitential overtures ? Was he not on the brink of a precipice from which her interference might save him ? Was some crime of deeper turpitude about to be perpetrated by his hand ?

Agitated by a thousand perplexities, she resolved to hurry to her sister for advice. The fatal subject must, at length, be broached between them ; and Marcia's clearer judgment would afford ready enlightenment to her doubts. Half an hour would convey her to Russell Square. The carriage was ordered ; and Augustus heard the departing sound of its wheels, as he sat writing in the library ; satisfied that it conveyed his wife to some place of frivolous amusement ; and suspecting that she was, after all, little less heartless than the rest of her sex, — her sex, as recorded in *his* experience of womankind !

Meanwhile, the road from Spring Gardens to those antipodes of the fashionable world to which Mr.

Croker's satire has imparted peculiar distinction, was very tedious to Susan. The narrow streets appeared closer and more oppressive than usual ; and, when she arrived at the Forbes's door, and found, to her infinite mortification, that her sister had been sent for into Northamptonshire that morning by old Mrs. Warren (by whom, since she became her favourite nephew's wife, she had been regarded more as a daughter than her own graceless child), Mrs. Hamilton's distress was complete ! She knew that Forbes would be detained till a late hour at the House. But could she not drive round to Westminster, and request a few minutes' interview with him in her carriage ? Hastily alighting, she wrote, in his own library, a line or two, expressive of her wishes ; then desired her servants to drive round by the Waterloo Road to Westminster Bridge, that she might secure an hour for deliberation, ere she addressed herself, for the first time, to her former lover, respecting the misconduct of one whom *he* had been the first to denounce to her as worthless.

The night air was refreshing. The smooth motion of the carriage, when she reached the broad level of the Surrey Road, soothed the excess of her agitation ; and, at the foot of Westminster Bridge, late as it was, — almost midnight, — a crowd was assembled to watch the arrival of the Admiralty Barge, with its gay awning and gayer strains of music ; — Lady Baldock and her giddy friends returning from their pleasure-party at Richmond !

Trifling as was this incident, it renewed in Susan's mind that susceptibility to the influence of society, — that apprehension of "the world's dread laugh," — so instinctive in the human mind. If, after all, she were assigning importance to a thing of no manner of con-

sequence? If it were *known* that she had withdrawn her grave brother-in-law from an important debate in the House of Commons, to consult him upon the propriety of intercepting her husband's elopement with his cousin;—when Augustus might, in truth, be intent only on a week's bathing at Cowes, and Mrs. Cadogan, on effecting some new conquest? The Laxington livery would be recognised by the ushers who would receive the note from her servant: or the billet be delivered into wrong hands, the story transpire, and cover her with confusion! As the carriage turned into Palace Yard, she suddenly bade the coachman drive home; and dispersed into the street the fragments of the note she had involuntarily torn to pieces at this harassing suggestion.

Installed, however, once more in her own dressing-room, in the room which recalled to her eyes the mysterious scene which grew more mysterious on reflection, her embarrassment returned. Again she felt persuaded that some real and serious evil was impending. Augustus, the most conventionalised, the most world-governed of men in his manners and demeanour, could not have so exceeded the usual bounds of his frigid egotism, unless acting under some powerful influence. The excitement of some step about to emancipate him from all connection with herself, could alone have suggested the concessions to which he had condescended. She resolved to lay her anxieties before Lord Laxington. He, at least, would have no right to deride them; and, having dismissed her maid, she threw herself into her great chair, to count the tedious minutes till his lordship's return from the House. Two or three hours might elapse,—even more; for, at that critical period, the debates of the Lords were frequently prolonged till a late hour. But he would, at least, return

before his son was likely to start for his journey ; and all would be safe.

The time passed slowly, very slowly, as she sat with her eyes fixed on the gorgeous clock, which had scarcely seemed to mark the earlier moments of her married life ; but which she had lately adopted as a sort of admonitory companion,—a companion that reminded her how rapidly even the bitter hours of adversity glide from our endurance. Till that night, she had never felt them tedious. Her mind, fixed on a single object, was usually careless of the lapse of time. But now, a thousand varying cares assailed her. She was displeased with herself. She fancied she had acted harshly—unworthily ; that her harshness might prove the origin of guilt,—the origin of suffering. Throwing aside the book she had vainly taken into her hands, she leaned her heavy head upon her hand ; till the confused noises ringing in her ears, and the burning tears that fell from her eyes, became almost *too* painful.

At length, the cause of Hamilton's extraordinary conduct suddenly flashed upon her mind. He was about to fight a duel, about to hazard his life ! and in the careful moments, which might be his last, had been anxious to reconcile himself to her, perhaps to confess his faults,—appeal to her forgiveness,—seek her counsels, or bestow advice or warning, upon herself. This new idea was sufficient to chill the glow upon her cheeks, and strike new anguish into her heart. In the hour of danger, the offender became again Augustus,—again her husband,—again the lover of her girlhood!—She determined to go to him,—to interrogate,—to explain !—

The communication between his dressing-room and her own had been so long closed, that she was not sur-

prised, on gently unlocking, and attempting to open the door, to find her entrance impeded by a heavy wardrobe; placed there, probably, in some moment of scorn and defiance, by the order of Hamilton. But she was not discouraged. She had only to go round by the vestibule and a corridor, to reach his private door. There was something, however, in the publicity of this attempt, which startled her. The coved ceiling of the grand staircase caused the shutting of every door to be heard throughout the house. The porter, who was sitting up for Lord Laxington in the hall below, would certainly hear her, and make his remarks public on the morrow. But the case was too urgent for scruples; and, as quietly as she could, Susan quitted her room, stole along the passage, and stood beside her husband's door. And now, indeed, she trembled from head to foot. She felt that her voice would be inarticulate in attempting to address him; and, with a hand almost powerless from agitation, she began to turn the handle of the door.

It was locked! She tapped gently — louder — more loudly still. No reply. She placed her head against the door, and listened. Not a sound! "He is already sleeping soundly," murmured Susan. "It would be impossible for him to sleep on the eve of an event such as I anticipated. I am mistaken."

As she was on the point of returning to her room, Lord Laxington's carriage stopped at the house; and, with infinite joy, she heard his lordship cross the hall and enter the library. "At least," thought she, "no harm will be done by disclosing my conjectures to his father." And, waiting only till the servants in attendance on his lordship retired to bed, she crept down stairs, and made her way into his presence.

"My dear Susan, — *up* at this hour?" exclaimed

Lord Laxington, as soon as he recovered the surprise occasioned by the sudden apparition of the tall white figure, with a taper in its hand, which glided into the room, as he was pacing up and down in the excitement of release from tedious confinement. "Is any thing the matter?" And, on noticing her pale cheeks and swollen eyelids, he took her hand kindly, and led her to the sofa. In the sympathy arising from the flood of tears which burst from her eyes, he even added, in an under voice, — "That fellow has been tormenting her again! That damned fellow will be the death of her!" —

Lord Laxington was, in fact, in a mood to render any disagreeable interruption particularly inopportune. He was in the highest spirits. He had been making an able speech, — the great speech of the night, — the great speech of his own life; — one which had been received by all parties with applause and admiration; and which he fancied, as orators are apt to fancy, had done much to turn the scale of victory on the side it advocated. The overwhelming cheers, and still more deferential attention of the House, dwelt in his ears, when Susan entered the room. He was still intoxicated with victory, still engrossed by the congratulations he had received from his colleagues and anticipations of the morrow's triumph in the impression his arguments were likely to produce on the country. No man better understood than Lord Laxington the vivid force of that electric chain with which the press unites the scattered energies of the mighty empire it was his ambition to convince and subjugate; — a chain which, during the agitation of every great popular question, communicates from city to city, with the velocity of lightning, the vibrations of opinion created in the stormy metropolis. He

knew that his name was about to become rife in the mouths of men ; and with greater favour than had given it utterance for months or even years before.

These circumstances considered, he listened with greater patience than might have been anticipated to Susan's recapitulations ; but though with patience, with very little sympathy.

"My dear child !" said he, in a tone of kindness arising from his own self-satisfaction ; "you shut yourself up from society till you become so miserably nervous that you have no control over your feelings. All this is mere fancy. Augustus may find it convenient to leave town for a week, for reasons he cannot explain to you. He has embarrassments — he has engagements ; and being perfectly and scandalously indifferent to his public duties, suits his own convenience without referring his absence to *my* opinion, or *your* inclinations. So far from being likely to meditate an elopement with Mrs. Cadogan, I have reason to know that, for many months past, they have been on terms of complete estrangement. I was at Brookes's this evening. If my son had got into a quarrel of any kind, I am persuaded the rumour would have reached me. Go to bed, my dear Susan, and sleep away your apprehensions, or you will make yourself ill to very little purpose."

"And you will not go into his room for a few minutes' conversation, before — — "

"I will send Dawkins to him the moment he is awake in the morning," said Lord Laxington, half-yawning. "It must be a journey of a very remarkable nature that could get Augustus out of his dressing-room before nine o'clock."

"Perhaps the porter can tell us at what o'clock his horses are ordered ?"

"The poor devil is gone to bed. Don't let us wake him for such nonsense. However," continued Lord Laxington, taking up his candle and kissing his daughter-in-law on the forehead in token of dismissal, "it gives me real satisfaction to perceive that, in spite of the delinquent's offences, he has not *quite* forfeited the affections of his wife; — eh, Susan? I fancy we may yet retire to Mayfield, — to our Sabine farm, — to roast turnips and cultivate the domestic virtues? Come, come! Don't shake your head! Take a good night's rest, and think better of it. This has been a red letter day to me; and I shall not look back upon it with the less satisfaction, if it prove the means of effecting a reconciliation between you and Augustus. Good night!"

CHAP. XLVIII.

And now, the stillness of the country seems
To come about her with its listening dreams.

LEIGH HUNT.

"WHY,—*why*—did you not wake me earlier?" cried Mrs. Hamilton to Wheeler, when, roused from a heavy sleep on the following day, she had the mortification to find herself lying half-dressed on the bed; having thrown herself down for a few minutes' rest, and been overtaken by that heavy torpor, into which nature often subsides after any trying crisis.

"It is scarcely one o'clock, ma'am," replied the attendant, in a tone more than usually subdued; "and my lord gave 'special orders, before he went out, that you was on no account to be disturbed."

"Has Lord Laxington left home, then, without seeing me?" ejaculated Susan.

"His lordship is gone out riding with Sir Robert Peel," answered the chambermaid, to whom the polite art of lying was as second nature. "But my lord begged me particularly to say, ma'am, that he had made the investigation you desired, and that Mr. Hamilton was gone into the country for a short time, with his friend Lord Henry Reresby."

"At what hour this morning did Mr. Hamilton set off?"

"At no hour this morning, ma'am. Master slept at Lord Henry's last night, in order not to disturb the family here. Now the House sits so late, ma'am, and my lord comes home at such unconscionable hours, the poor dumesticks is positively worked off their legs; and though, to be sure, 'tis only the servants'-hall people as sits up, Mr. Hamilton very considerately considered that—"

"Yes, yes! I understand!" interrupted Susan; vexed to have been betrayed into so much unnecessary excitement the preceding night; and entertaining little doubt, from the manner in which Wheeler watched her during this explanation, that her nocturnal visit to the door of Augustus's empty room had produced considerable merriment among the servants.

"As my lord is out, ma'am, perhaps you'll please to breakfast in your boudoir?" inquired Wheeler, as she completed her lady's toilet. And, on receiving an answer in the affirmative, the waiting gentlewoman quitted the room, to issue orders to the "servants'-hall people."

"How absurd have I been!" ejaculated Susan, on finding herself alone: "and how strangely have my presentiments deceived me! For never was my heart

so heavy as last night,—never, never were my dreams so uneasy; and, even this morning, I feel as if I had undergone some severe affliction, some great peril! Heigho! Were Marcia in town, or were poor Julia as gay as formerly, she would scold me out of my low spirits. But *now*, I scarcely dare show myself in Brook Street. Lord Laxington is so displeased when he hears of my being there, and Julia herself so peevish when we meet, that my visits are productive of vexation to both. Heigho!"

Susan's reflections were interrupted on entering her boudoir, by finding not only her breakfast waiting for her, but Lady Leighton and her daughter; Lady Leighton, whom she so systematically avoided, and who had latterly appeared to avoid *her*.

"My dear Mrs. Hamilton!" cried the untimely visitor, rising and offering her hand, "I should feel ashamed of this intrusion, were I not here by the express sanction of Lord Laxington. I met him riding just now in the park, as I was on my way to pass the day with Blanche and the children, at Hammersmith; and he told me you were ill and nervous, and would be the better for a breath of country air. Nay, he went so far as to *promise* you would accompany me this morning to my cottage."

"I very much regret"—Susan began—

"No, no!" exclaimed Lady Leighton, reseating herself at the table. "I *know* that you have no engagement. Lord Laxington gave me his word that you were only going to spend the day alone, and make a bad head-ache still worse. Believe me it will be more easily cured, even in company which suits you so little as mine. So be very kind, and give Blanche and myself a cup of coffee, instead of the breakfast which is waiting for us at Fairlywell; and then put on your

bonnet, and come and tell me what you think of my *rus in urbe*."

The former part of the request, at least, Susan had no plea for refusing: and Blanche Leighton's gentle smiles were well calculated to create forbearing feelings towards her mother. Mrs. Hamilton noticed too, that, in spite of her assumed gaiety, Lady Leighton herself was looking ill. No rouge,—no finery; and when her hand encountered Susan's in receiving the coffee cup, it was cold as marble.

"Remember," continued her ladyship, "I am enticing you to no gay villa;—no Boyle Farm,—no Percy's Cross. Fairlywell is merely a family-den, which Sir Joseph has been good enough to buy, in order to hide the nurses and children during that part of the year when hot weather and London air conspire to make them sick, and cross, and disagreeable. You will not see a soul at the cottage."

"*That*, indeed, is an inducement!" sighed Susan. "This long season in town has made me quite impatient of society. I am at best a poor weak creature; and shall rejoice if, some day or other, I can persuade Lord Laxington to settle wholly in the country."

"You will do very wrong. An official man, whose days have passed in the hubbub of committee-rooms, council chambers, cabinets, and clubs, becomes, at length, a portion of the mass, and exists only in a crowd. Such people *must* be always talking or listening."

"But I do not ask him to become a recluse. Let him amuse himself in the country by listening to his country-neighbours, and talking to *me*," said Mrs. Hamilton, forcing a smile.

"Talking to *you*, and listening to his country neighbours, from June to January, from January to June!"

e aculated Lady Leighton, with a look of commiseration. "He would 'rather be a dog and bay the moon,' in St. Margaret's Church-yard! No, no! it would never do! The intercourse of civilised society becomes as indispensable as air or food to those who have expended their lives and souls in communication with persons of their own condition and modes of thinking. You might as well expect my friend Laxington to feel at ease in the blanket of a Red Indian, as satisfied with the humdrum limits of provincial life."

Susan sighed ; wondering that frail human creatures should presume to be so fastidious in their acceptance of human happiness, and beginning to murmur a quotation from Beattie's very artificial stanza in praise of the charms of nature.

"Now, infidel, I have you on the hip!" interrupted Lady Leighton. "Although *my* 'warbling woodlands' are only the shrubberies of Hammersmith, and *my* 'resounding shore' the green banks of the Thames, you cannot 'renounce them,' and 'hope to be forgiven.' Blanche, my dear! Mrs. Hamilton has finished her breakfast. Ring for her bonnet and gloves, as resolutely as if you were ringing your own bell, for your own."

In her eagerness to secure Susan's company, Miss Leighton readily obeyed. There was no further hope of escape ; for so little was Lord Laxington's daughter-in-law accustomed to maintain her own will in opposition to that of others, that it did not surprise her to find herself driving along the King's Road with Lady Leighton, instead of passing the morning, as she wished, in her own dressing-room. But she experienced benefit from the change, and the feelings of restraint it served to impose ; and when they reached the environs of the river, and the fresh air came

breathing upon her feverish forehead, she was almost inclined to thank her companions for the polite persecution by which they had forced her from home.

The London sunshine had already begun to wear that copper-coloured hue, which renders an autumnal airing in Hyde Park so dispiriting a recreation. But the moment they emerged from the smoky atmosphere of the metropolis, and the blue skies and white clouds appeared in all their majesty, Susan's heart felt lightened of half its cares. Yet, strange to tell, in proportion as *her* spirits rose, those of Lady Leighton declined; and when, as they entered the short byeroad overgrown on either side by a hedge of evergreens, leading to Fairlywell, and Mrs. Hamilton, while she listened to the carolling of the birds, and inhaled the fragrance of the gardens, suddenly exclaimed,—“How much I thank you for forcing me to be of your party. What a delightful morning. What a happy day I am going to pass!” an expression of the deepest sadness overspread the countenance of her companion.

But this was speedily dissipated when they approached the house. On the door steps stood the children, full of smiles,—full of welcome; with nose-gays, fresh gathered for mamma, and kisses still sweeter upon their little lips. Mrs. Hamilton had never before seen Lady Leighton surrounded by her family, or given her credit for the kind and womanly affections which their presence served to call forth. The youngest was soon in her arms. One fine boy insisted upon dragging his sister to the newly-mown lawn, sloping towards the river, that she might see him roll in the short grass he had gathered and insisted on calling a haycock;—while a little curly-haired girl possessed herself of Susan's hand, and

made her one of the family party. All seemed so merry, so joyous, so contented ;—the trees rustling in the wind,—the fresh breeze from the river,—the ripple of its tide against the bank,—the freshness and sunniness of the whole scene, were so refreshing to her senses,—that Mrs. Hamilton seated herself on a bench under a fine tulip-tree upon the lawn, with a feeling more nearly approaching to enjoyment than she had experienced for months.

Lady Leighton at Fairlywell was a very different person from any Lady Leighton she had seen before. She was now calm, subdued, rational—nay, even feminine ; while Blanche seemed to take especial pleasure in doing the honours of her favourite retreat to the sister of Sir Edward Berkely. The weather was so inviting, that, after strolling through the gardens to satisfy the restlessness of the children, they returned to their shady seat commanding a view of the river, with its panoramic movement and endless variety ; and the morning passed pleasantly away in conversation, in which the scandal of London had less share than might be supposed possible, when it is remembered that the season was still in progress ; and the garden which sheltered the fair gossips, within view of Kew Bridge and reach of the Richmond steam-boat !

CHAP. XLIX.

Ce doux sentiment de jouissance et d'espérance qui vivifie la jeunesse, désormais me quitta pour jamais. Je recherchai le passé qui n'étoit plus, et qui ne pouvoit renaitre. Je ne vis plus devant moi que les tristes restes d'une vie insipide! — ROUSSEAU.

It had been arranged that Mrs. Hamilton should return to town in the evening; Lady Leighton and her daughter being tempted by the beauty of the weather, to sleep, and pass the following day at Fairlywell. But during dinner, the sound of a carriage was heard on the gravel; and while Susan was beginning to lament that their little social party should be broken by an arrival, a letter from Lord Laxington was placed in her hands.

“Understanding from Sir Joseph Leighton,” he said, “that his family would remain at Fairlywell for a day or two, he entreated Susan to comply with Lady Leighton’s desire, and profit by the opportunity to enjoy a little country air.” He mentioned engagements which would prevent his seeing her, even if she returned to Spring Gardens the following day; and begged her forgiveness for having abetted Lady Leighton’s plot to entrap her into a visit.

“I perceive that our secret is betrayed!” said her hostess, as Susan closed the letter. “But as Mr. Hamilton is away, you must not rebel against Lord Laxington’s authority. You are not wanted at home, you see, much as we want you here. So comply with a good grace, where resistance is useless. Lord Laxington promised me to send down Wheeler with your night things; so that you have *no* excuse.”

"Indeed, I require none," said Susan. "Since you are so kind as to accept my company, I am well content to be your visitor." Every thing was soon arranged, and Mrs. Hamilton installed in a quiet little bed-room commanding a view of the river; where, exhausted by the vigils of the preceding night, she laid her head upon a strange pillow, not a little startled to find herself the inmate of Lady Leighton.

The following morning, however, disappointed her expectations. When she awoke, a heavy shower was pouring upon the lawn and stirring up the mud of the Thames; nor was it till late in the afternoon that a gleam of sunshine afforded a renewal of her pleasures of the preceding day. It was, however, somewhat *more* than a renewal. Having accepted the eager invitation of the children, the redoubled fragrance of the flowers and freshness of the verdure, almost compensated for the morning's confinement. Lady Leighton, engaged in conversation with Blanche and her elder boy, did not immediately follow; and Susan, outstripped by her playful companions, found herself in undisturbed possession of a broad gravel terrace, overhanging the river and overhung by straggling groups of Spanish chesnuts.

To her, to be alone, and meditative, and mournful, were synonymous. She could not help contrasting the isolation of her social position with the household comforts of her hostess. Even Lady Leighton was happy at home! In the affections of her children, even Lady Leighton possessed a refuge from the world and its mal-interpretations. *They* loved her, — *they* respected her, — *they* would have turned fiercely on all or any who presumed to disparage their mother. Yes! — at that moment, — involun-

tarily, — almost unconsciously, — Susan beheld in the long-contemned Lady Leighton an object of envy !

In the generous and frank character of Blanche, too, there was something peculiarly attaching ; and never had the charm been more apparent to Susan than on the present occasion. Her young companion profited by their prolonged *tête-à-tête* to indulge in a thousand inquiries concerning Sir Edward ; and a thousand comments which, to any other than the unsuspecting Mrs. Hamilton, would have betrayed the secret of her preference. But it appeared a matter of course to Susan that every one should evince an interest in her noble, warm-hearted brother ; and, if she wondered at all, it was at the air of indifference with which Lady Leighton, on joining them, listened to his praises. Mrs. Hamilton was at a loss to interpret the depressed tone and manner of her hostess ; for, except while the children were present, the lady of the house seemed too much dispirited to talk. Insensibly even the cheerful voice of Blanche saddened into a whisper ; and Susan was glad when the hour of retiring enabled her to have recourse to a book in her own room. She had no desire to penetrate the secrets of her companions ; yet could not bear to witness a despondency to which she had no means of administering consolation.

Little did she imagine that Lady Leighton's change of manner bore reference solely to herself ; or that she was detained at Fairlywell by stratagem, to spare her the painful knowledge of impending misfortune ; — that her husband was stretched upon a bed of torment, — a bed of danger, — a bed of death ; — and that Lord Laxington, in mercy to the tenderness of her nature and frailty of her health, had been careful to spare her the spectacle of his dying agonies !

Yes!—the aggressor and the aggrieved had met; and Mr. Cadogan's injuries been fully revenged! Hamilton had been left upon the ground, mortally wounded; and though, by the advice of Lord Henry Reresby, he avoided the usual mock-heroic display of firing in the air (as implying an avowal of injury to his antagonist fatal to the reputation of Mrs. Cadogan), the future Lord Everleigh took his hasty departure with his “friend,” with the pleasing consciousness that he had forfeited his life to the laws of his country, by the infliction of such justice on the betrayer of his honour, as would cut short Augustus Hamilton's career of villainy, or render him back to society a maimed and mutilated being! —

Within a few hours of Lord Laxington's interview with Susan, the intelligence of this disastrous meeting had reached Spring Gardens; and, overpowering as it was, and embittered by the consciousness that his daughter-in-law's timely warning ought to have fore-stalled the event, his lordship did not leave home to repair to the presence of his unfortunate son, without taking the kindest precautions in her favour. The surgical attendants of the wounded man had announced that an operation was indispensable, demanding the utmost tranquillity for the sufferer; and on this, as well as every other account, the afflicted father resolved to prolong, to the latest moment, Mrs. Hamilton's ignorance of the event.

But to *whose* care could he entrust her, to secure her against intrusion under circumstances so afflicting? Her sister was absent. His own giddy daughter was not the person to whom so critical a duty could be confided; nor, among those London acquaintances whom Susan had carefully refrained from adopting as friends, was there one possessed of

courage for such a task. He could think of no person but Lady Leighton ; in whose strength of mind he had ample confidence, and to whose kindness of nature he afforded more credit than was granted by the rest of the world. He was aware of Susan's distaste for her society. But it was less a *comforter* he required for his daughter-in-law, than a companion who possessed the means of secluding her from a premature disclosure.

Having, accordingly, despatched a confidential note to Berkely Square, his lordship had the satisfaction of receiving instant and personal promises of compliance. Nor was Lady Leighton's assistance unwillingly afforded. She was at once eager to prove to her alienated friend, that, in spite of contending party-interests, she was not ungrateful for former concessions ; and to strengthen her bond of friendship with a family whose good will was indispensable to the happiness of her child. Deeply touched by the afflicting position of the gentle Susan, she did not venture to confide even to Blanche the real motive of Mrs. Hamilton's visit to Fairlywell ; fearing that the sympathy of her young and warm-hearted daughter would be uncontrollable by those considerations of prudence which sufficed as a restriction upon her own.

But to maintain this system of imposition, or detain Susan another day without explanation, was impossible. On the morrow, her suspicions became excited by the pretext adopted by Lady Leighton, to dissuade her from returning to town ; and, as a last resource, a letter from Lord Laxington was remitted to her, stating that "a serious accident" had befallen Angustus, and imploring her to remain quiet a few hours longer. But an announcement of such a nature served only to increase her agitation, and redouble her

anxiety to be gone. "It was her duty to be on the spot,—to be with the sufferer,—to be with her husband." She insisted on returning to Spring Gardens; and, on interrogating Wheeler, succeeded in drawing forth a modified admission of the state of the case. "Mr. Hamilton had been wounded in a duel;—Mr. Hamilton's life was in danger!"

Susan's first impulse was to break through all further opposition on the part of Lady Leighton, and hasten to his presence. But in the height of her agony, a chilling surmise repressed the movement. Alas! *one* only motive could have determined his father to forbid her coming! Caroline was doubtless by his side! He had sent for Caroline to be the soother of his sufferings,—the comforter of his last moments! *She*,—his wife,—was banished; and the dying bed of Augustus Hamilton was no place for an encounter between his mistress and his wife!

The mere suggestion seemed to convert her into marble. From that moment, she spoke not a word,—shed not a tear,—attempted not to rise from her seat. But there was something in this state of rigid immobility more appalling to Lady Leighton than all her previous agitation; and it was a relief to every one at Fairlywell, when, towards evening, Lord Laxington himself was announced; who, on entering the presence of his daughter-in-law, folded her in his arms with a degree of fervour that at once revealed the extent of her misfortune.

Yes! all was over!—She was indeed a widow. Pressed to the heart of the sorrowing father of Augustus, the frozen springs of nature were once more loosed. Her tears burst forth, and mingled with his. All restraint was at an end. There was nothing,—there was no

one to interpose between herself and the dead.—Augustus was her own again. Who,—who would mourn for him with a tenderness and a constancy like hers!—

CHAP. L.

“ Pourquoi succomber au malheur ? ” dit Zadig au pécheur. “ C'est,” répondit-il, “ que je n'y vois pas de ressource.” — VOLTAIRE.

SUSAN'S cup of afflictions had, at length, received the overbrimming drop fated to complete its measure of bitterness. There was no further motive for fortitude, —no encouragement for patience ; and, as might have been anticipated, she resigned herself unresistingly to the influence of her anguish. But if any thing could be more deserving commiseration than the frantic despair of the young widow, it was the dignified composure with which the heart-stricken Lord Laxington stood, face to face with sorrow, and wrestled with his feelings for her sake.

To him, the blow was indeed a heavy dispensation ; and, during the trials of the two preceding days, old age appeared to have come suddenly upon him, and self-reproach to have seared his brow with furrows. The horrors he had witnessed, the tortures and imprecations of his dying son, the prospects of his own withered ambition, his heirless honours, his isolated existence, had scattered his grey hairs like a storm.

Still he bore up. He sought no repose, betrayed no impatience, uttered no lamentations ; — but took his station beside Susan, listening in silence to those thousand

incoherent exclamations which conveyed the most cutting reproaches to his heart. Unconscious of Lord Laxington's presence, the frantic mourner accused *him* as the author of all the errors, all the vices of his son ; and upbraided him as the source of her despair.

She fancied—(for what do not the afflicted fancy) that had she not been kept in ignorance of the condition of her husband, *her* aid might have effectually ministered to his recovery ;—that he had not been treated with sufficient care ;—that his sufferings might have been softened by her tenderness,—his dying agony soothed by her forgiveness. But to these ravings, Lord Laxington forbore to reply ; submitting patiently to her injustice, rather than admit how unfit for a woman's presence had been the departing scene ;—how fierce, how unresigned, the spirit of the dying man. He would not wound her feelings by describing those bodily pangs which must have inflicted an indelible impression on her tender nature ; or drive her to despair by confessing that, callous to the last, Augustus had neither regarded the future with trembling, nor the past with repentance.

In silence, too, he listened to Susan's lamentations that she had been denied the poor consolation of looking for the last time upon the features of the dead. Oppressed by harrowing recollections, it was not for *him* to depict the defeaturement of the face she loved, — the rapid progress of decay,—the victory of death over the frailty of mere mortality ; — but, secretly rejoicing that it was no longer possible for her to accomplish her desire of beholding the mangled remains of her husband, he consented that she should return on the following day to Spring Gardens, whither the body had been removed. *He* it was who, with tottering steps, supported her into the darkened chamber.

He it was who cast himself on his knees beside her, as she knelt before the coffin. *He* it was who exhorted her to the duty of resignation to the decrees of heaven ; — even while himself bowed down to the dust by extremity of grief.

And it was thus that, after months and months of sullen estrangement, she was doomed to be united to Augustus ! That voice which had so often replied to him in chilling monosyllables, now cried aloud upon his name with a thousand epithets of endearment ; and those arms, which had so recently repelled him, were now flung with frantic caresses round the coffin that covered his remains. But there was no Augustus to reply,—no Augustus to rejoice in the renewal of her unavailing tenderness !—The offender was gone,—*was gone !*

So lately as he had stood in that very chamber, in the full vigour of health,—so lately as his accents had sounded in her ears,—so lately as his footstep had traversed the floor ! It seemed as if even yet her intervention might avail to recall him to life ;—to impede that fatal meeting—to annul the past, and secure their future happiness. The whole scene of their last interview was again before her. Oh ! baffling, persecuting, distracting retrospections of our early days of bereavement ! How readily do ye suggest remedies for the irremediable ; how cruelly perplex us with profitless axioms of experience, vouchsafed only when the lesson has ceased to be available ! Bending over the newly dead, we live again their last moments,—their last days ; and, at length wise,—at length enlightened,—believe we can yet withhold them from the grave ! Alas ! one touch of the clammy forehead,—one glance at the fearful paraphernalia of death,—realises the fatal truth !

From reveries such as these, nothing appeared to rouse the mind of poor Susan ; nor could any persuasions induce her to quit the chamber of death. Mrs. Tottenham came (appalled, if not tenderly affected, by the sad end of her only brother) to suggest "custom" as a law for the instant removal of the father and widow to Mayfield ; where propriety required them to remain till the last mournful ceremonies had taken place. The Forbeses, too, apprised of the dread event, hastened from Northamptonshire (from the dying bed of the disgraced and broken-hearted mother of Mrs. Cadogan), with the view of withdrawing Susan from the afflicting scene. But all that Bernard's eloquence could urge was urged in vain ; all that Marcia's tenderness could suggest, was suggested to thankless ears. Even in Lord Laxington's presence, they did not scruple to represent to Mrs. Hamilton that, after what had occurred, the protection of her own family was indispensable, and a home among the friends of her childhood, the only home that remained for her.

"Do not let them torment me thus!" was her reply, throwing herself for security into the arms of the grief-stricken father of Augustus. "Do not let them say I am without a friend—without a home! Tell them that *you* are my friend—that *your* roof will shelter me ;—that you will suffer me to be unto you as a daughter. *He* was your only son,—*I*, his faithful wife ; and, whatever disunion chanced between us, he would have learned to love me again : yes ! I am sure Augustus would have one day learned to love me again. My patience would have won him back to me. We should all have been once more happy!"

"You *deserved* to be happy, my poor child ; no one

could better deserve to be happy!" murmured Lord Laxington, tenderly embracing her.

"He calls me his child!" cried Susan, turning wildly towards her sister. "You hear him? He does not abandon me. My husband's father will not turn me out to mourn among strangers!"

"Abandon you!" exclaimed the unhappy old man: "when I do, may my GOD abandon *me*! You are all that is left for my consolation. But I am a fallen man, Susan! *Can* you resign yourself to share my broken fortunes?"

"Let me but dwell under your roof," she replied. "Let me live among those who claimed kindred with *him*—let me mourn with them—let me intercede with them to Heaven for his pardon and happiness, and I shall be content. Do not drive me from you!" she continued, seizing the hands of Lord Laxington, as if apprehensive that the arguments of Forbes might induce him to relinquish his intentions in her favour. "I will be no trouble to you. I will obey all your commands,—forestall all your wishes,—so you will only permit me to fulfil the duties of a daughter towards the father of the husband of my youth!"

And thus, invoking him with the tender expostulation of Ruth the Moabitess, Susan clave to her ruined father-in-law. It was beside the bier of Augustus, that Lord Laxington uttered a grateful benediction upon her head; and that the widow, kneeling before heaven, pronounced a solemn engagement that whither he went she would follow;—that *his* people should be *her* people;—and that nought but death should part them for evermore.

Marcia saw that it was in vain to contend against the force of such devoted affection.

CHAP. LI.

Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
The Gods themselves throw incense.

Lear.

NEARLY two years had elapsed, after the death of Augustus Hamilton; and the world, accustomed to witness the expiration of eternal attachments and the consolement of inconsolable grief, was not a little perplexed to find his widow still a mourner, and still the inmate of Lord Laxington. The father and daughter resided together at Mayfield, in comparative solitude; deriving their sole comfort from the study (though tardy, not unavailable) of those lessons of wisdom, which shine for us during the gloomy season of adversity as the stars during the night season. Lord Laxington's infirm health afforded a pretext to absent himself from his parliamentary duties. Susan shrank from the remotest idea of returning to town; nor (with the exception of a few weeks passed in attendance on the death-bed of Lady Berkely) had she yet quitted her father-in-law. Lord Laxington, on the other hand, in spite of the tendencies of his nature, had a thousand motives to strengthen his inclination for seclusion.

Though the ex-Minister had wisely declined instituting legal proceedings against the antagonist of his unfortunate son, he was aware that the scandalous origin of the duel had obtained the utmost publicity; that it had been descanted upon by the newspapers, and circumstantially discussed in his own class of society. He knew that Cadogan—undivorceable and undivorced,—was regarded as a deeply injured man;

that Mrs. Warren had fallen a victim to her profound sense of the infamy of her daughter ; that Mrs. Cadogan, disinherited by her mother, and driven into exile by the reprobation of the world, was living in obscurity abroad ; that the memory of his son was still accursed ; and he had the mortification of believing the errors of the offender to be deeply registered against himself !

Dark, too, as were his own prospects, those of his country appeared, in *his* estimation, deeper and deeper still. The Reform Bill had opened the way for further innovations. New people had arisen,—new measures were in contemplation. His former friends were dispersed, his associations broken up. The whole occupation of his life had ceased with his official engagements. His place knew him no longer.

The mansion in Spring Gardens was tenanted by a Whig Lord ; a notable Reformer in his day, whose patriotism had subsided to a singular moderation of temperature since he became a sharer of the public loaves and fishes. Weald Park was in the occupation of the great Mr. Burtonshaw ;—nay, the very club he had been accustomed to frequent, was deserted for the more ostentatious purlieus of Carlton Terrace. His old haunts were indeed strange to Lord Laxington !

But, above all, the party in which his identity had merged,—the party in whose service he had laboured, to the sacrifice of every higher duty,—had virtually ceased to exist. In the effervescence of the great national crisis, one portion of its supporters had foamed up into Conservatism ; the other half, a *caput mortuum*, fallen to the bottom,—heavy, helpless, extinct ; —and Lord Laxington, in his compulsory visits to the metropolis, found himself a disconnected link between the two, unable to whip up his opinions into the froth of Lord Baldock, unwilling to let them fall to the

ground, with the stupid indifference exhibited by the King Priam of the Tottenham generation. And thus, mistrusted alike by the moderate and *immoderate* Tories, his political, as well as his moral existence, became null and void.

But to what *other* mode of Life in London can a superannuated placeman shape his daily habits? Though the waxen wings of ambition may have melted, he does not easily content himself with the vulgar level of the earth. Bitterly does he grudge the usurper of his official throne the heritage which has been taken from him; and hard is the trial to observe a show of adverse faces on the benches where once the cordial countenances of friends smiled upon his entrantee. Harder still, that even the official underlings, once eager to liek his feet, should snarl upon him from his own kennel as he passes: that the very gourds which sprang up to prosperity in his sunshine, should shid their ponderous fruit upon him to crush him to the dust!

Much, in fact, as has been indited in verse and prose concerning the ingratitude of mankind, an unprecedented audacity of thanklessness is perceptible in the present generation, likely to afford a pungent text to the moralizers of posterity. The little month succeeding the death of George IV. adduces melancholy evidence that "Put not your trust in princes," is an adage fairly to be reciprocated, by modern potentates, against their hollow-hearted favourites.

Even Lord Laxington's daughter had joined the ranks of his adversaries. Ruined by boundless extravagance, William Tottenham and his wife, in common with a thousand others of their kind, though eager to attribute their distress to the operation of the Reform Bill, and consequently to revile it as a

revolutionary measure, did not scruple to vituperate the folly of Lord Laxington for choosing to remain in opposition. But the Tottenhams were expiating their course of folly in miserable expatriation ; and London was only the more cheerless to Lord Laxington.

At Mayfield, meanwhile, he had the comfort, thanks to Susan's assiduous attentions, of finding his wishes respected, his sorrows soothed, his circumstances carefully considered. The death of his son had, with Susan's coalescence, so far disengumbered his property, as to enable him to appropriate a considerable portion to the liquidation of his debts. By prudence and self-denial, even his engagements to his ward were partly discharged ; and he had the gratification of welcoming Claneustace on his frequent visits to Mayfield, with the consciousness of diminished and diminishing obligations.

If any earthly solace could supply the loss of children, friends, and prosperity, it was assuredly to be found in such tenderness as that of his daughter-in-law, and such kindness as that of his young friend. No child, no grandchild, could have been more his own than Susan. She was ready to read with him,—walk,—ride,—converse,—be silent. Her own family,—her brother,—her sister,—appeared to have become a secondary consideration. *They* had others to minister to their happiness, and the favour of the world to uphold them :—Lord Laxington had only herself ! It was therefore the study of her life to please him ;—and she succeeded. How were they ever to become weary of each other's company, while the theme dearest to both still remained uppermost in their thoughts !

Sir Edward Berkely was almost inclined to become jealous of Lord Laxington's influence, when, on visiting Mayfield with Claneustace, he saw their united

efforts fail to raise a smile on his sister's countenance. She was willing to ride with them during their stay, — to walk with them, — to consult them concerning the interests of her poor, or culture of her gardens. But he fancied that she was still *more* glad to witness their departure, that she might recur to undivided reminiscences of Augustus, and return to the Antigone-like devotion of the routine she had adopted. How could it be otherwise ? The source to which she had looked with confidence for happiness and companionship, was dried up for ever ; and it seemed as if, while contemplating the withered channel where once its waters flowed, she had still hopes of their re-appearance, bright and gladdening as of yore !

But if her brother grudged the affections of Susan to the family which had done so little to merit their acquisition, Claneustace was still less satisfied with the prolonged continuance of her grief. A frequent visitor at the house of Lord Laxington during the lifetime of his son, he had admired in Susan, so long as her illusion lasted, the tenderest of wives ; and, after the period of her enlightenment concerning Mrs. Cadogan, the most long-suffering, the most virtuous. Young, beautiful, and courted, he saw her recede from the homage of the world ; and wondered that the heart of man could become hardened to the merits of so fair a creature !

Sometimes, indeed, (for he was not *then* a lover,) Claneustace felt disposed to tax her with want of spirit ; and to regret that, in the more active virtues of life, she should not rival the high qualities of his favourite Marcia. But, if disenchanted from his boyish admiration of Julia Hamilton's beauty by the discovery of her deficiencies of mind and heart, and of Mrs. Forbes's intellectual powers by the humiliat-

ing consciousness of his own inferiority, his estimation of Susan's excellencies was destined to an hourly increase. Her conduct at the trying moment of her husband's death, surpassed all the young Marquis's expectations. Her praiseworthy devotion to Lord Laxington, her self-denial for the advancement of his interests, her resolution, her constancy, called forth his warmest admiration. Improved a thousand-fold in beauty by the tranquillity and regularity of rural life, he saw no one worthy to be her rival amid the gorgeous haunts from which he often escaped to become his guardian's guest. The very air at Mayfield was sooth-ing to him. *There* was the quiet home of which he had dreamed — *there* the studious seclusion in which he delighted. At every succeeding visit, he found it more and more difficult to tear himself away; at every return, he discovered new attractions in the mild love-liness of the young widow. Lord Laxington seemed gratified by the manifestation of his preference; and as Susan, absorbed by her own thoughts and the duties she had adopted, never hesitated to admit him as the companion of her walks or participator of her occupations, he was allowed to enjoy the best privilege of a lover, without hazarding the premature disclosure of his sentiments.

CHAP. LII.

'They have not found sufficient consolation for their shallow vanity in the promotion of the general interests of their fellow-creatures; and their miserable weakness hinders them from seeing how the real dignity of our nature consists in those affections which make improvement an hereditary descent from the past.—JOHN SCOTT.

BUT if the position of the Hamilton family and the prospects of the country had experienced a remarkable revolution, since that memorable evening when the Hamilton carriage was first descried in the inn-yard of the Tottenham Arms, by the prying eyes of Pen. Smith, a far greater change had befallen the destinies of the little Northamptonshire borough. After remaining *in statu quo* for a century and a half, without any other vicissitude in its administration than that of changing the name and title of its master from Peter, fourth Baron, to John, first Viscount, Tottenham, and from John, first Viscount, to Robert, Richard, and Henry, first, second, and third Earls of that name; and the style of its spiritual pastor, from the Rev. John Brown to the Rev. Jonathan Green, from the Rev. Jonathan Green to the Hon. and Rev. Robert Tottenham, from the Hon. and Rev. Robert Tottenham to the Rev. Jeremiah Mangles,—Laxington had suddenly experienced a mighty catastrophe; having fallen, as it were, from its high estate; or, according to the estimate of certain among its inhabitants, been raised to an estate more transcendent.

The borough was no longer “rotten!” Instead of Lord Tottenham’s *two* representatives, it now provided itself with *one* according to its own good liking;

adopting with alacrity the axiom of Hesiod, that half is sometimes more than the whole.

Under these circumstances, the Earl, its noble patron, disgusted by the insubordination of people whom he regarded as goods and chattels purchased with the gold of his ancestors, or moved, perhaps, by the necessity of raising a sufficient fund to secure four out of his six good-for-little and disfranchised sons from the impending horrors of the King's Bench, hastened to accept from Mr. Burtonshaw the sum of fifty thousand pounds, as the price of a property, which, two years before, had been rated at three times the value.

The borough, its new master, and its old, were equally content with the transaction. Jacob Smith alone found little to compensate his loss of the annual pickings of a fat agency. For Burtonshaw, after the example of Louis XIV., had set forth with the intention of becoming his own prime minister; and the utmost the intriguing attorney could achieve, in revenge for the mortification of finding it impossible to exempt even the parcel of land on which his own gorgeous, glaring brass-knockered mansion of attorneyship was erected, from the general transfer, was to raise a virulent faction against the new proprietor. In the impunity of a long lease, he perplexed and molested him in all his undertakings: brought down a member to oppose him at his election, and called meetings to uphold those ancient charters of the borough which, under the ascendancy of the Tottenham dynasty, had been suffered to sleep in the deed chest, from generation to generation.

In consequence of this unexpected *fronde*, the town maintained the liberties of certain thoroughfares; of pathways, where no one had ever found it convenient to walk, and of water privileges, by which no one had

ever dreamed of profiting. And Burtonshaw, who had united by purchase the Lancashire and Tottenham domains, and was resident at Weald Park, "the monarch of all he surveyed," (from the lodges of Everleigh Hall to the walls of the Manor House and Fir Grove, now, by the will of Mrs. Warren, the conjoint property of Bernard Forbes,) had the satisfaction of finding that he could not erect a mill, project a factory, or even hedge in a paddock, without the unpropitious form of Jacob Smith rising like an ink-Bottle Imp to oppose him. The unhappy nabob soon became no less disgusted with his new people, than his people with *him*; and Laxington became divided against itself.

In the days of its close boroughhood, it had owned but one mind, and that a little one; it had now a thousand; and each, in its own conceit, gigantic. There were not only the feuds of the Burtonshaws and Smithians (the Whigs and Conservatives); but the partizans of the Radical grocer, the *doctrinaire* apothecary, and St. Simonian linen-draper of the High-Street were at war within its walls. At the first Reform election, contested by the intrigues of Jacob Smith, a very tolerable riot was got up; and more windows were broken in the Borough than had taxed the industry of its glaziers from the great epoch of the Protestant Reformation, to the greater epoch of Radical Reform.

The gentle coterie, which once congratulated itself upon the peacefulness of its ways and pleasantness of its paths, had a regiment quartered in its purlieus. In spite of Jacob Smith, the chimnies of Squire Burtonshaw's steam engines (like the manufactories of fashionable novels) puffed forth incessant volumes. The elderly damsels of the market-place, stricken in years and sorrow, found their tabby haunts invaded by captains bold. and their snowy dimity defiled by

the progress of the arts of Peace and War. For lo ! the Hegira of a new faith had dawned upon the Borough.

Unhappy Laxington ! — Thrice hapless Pen. Smith ! who had not only forfeited her dignities as herald or Ancient Gower of the venerable house of Tottenham, but been banished, in retribution of her brother's professional offences, from the comfortable nest she had been feathering in the new-fangled house of Burtonshaw ! No resource remained for her ample leisure, but a general warfare with mankind ; and she accordingly constituted herself the Cassandra of the reformed empire.

Such changes as she had witnessed ! Such a millennium of peace and prosperity as Laxington had enjoyed, when Tottenham the tenth reigned in the Borough, and the late Lord Lancashire at Weald Park, who never stirred out without his four greys and out-riders ! The neighbourhood, so stirring, the borough so quiet, the town so genteel ! But *where* was the gentility of Laxington now ? — Alas ! it was not Echo that answered “*where !*” The whirring of Mr. Burtonshaw’s factories had murdered Echo !

The Tottenhams (its gods) were departed. An Indigo planter was settled at Weald. The tricolor apothecary had retired from business to Green-Oak Cottage. Everleigh, desecrated by the infamy of its mistress, was abandoned by its “gentlemanly” master, and Lady Ashley, re-married to an Irish lieutenant of dragoons. Even the Forbeses, detained in town by professional and parliamentary duties, would not suffer themselves to be intruded upon during those short visits to Northamptonshire which afforded repose and refreshment to enable Bernard to wrestle with the labours of the year. Instead of the five grooms

ambling daily with their letter-bags towards the post-office, nothing was to be seen but the blue and yellow chitabadar of the unpopular Nabaub of Weald Park ; or the dirty little pedestrian dog of all-work, whom Mr. Camomile of Green-Oak denominated his “*fut-boy*.”

“ Ah ! my dear Mrs. M. ! ”—Pen. Smith would despondingly falter, as she stirred her mild Hyson in company with the vicar’s widow and one or two ancient mummies belonging to her former sisterhood. “ Little did we dream of living to witness such awful changes. *I* thought the times bad enough when those flighty Hamiltons and Berkelys came down to settle in No’thamptonshire (and little to be sure was the good they brought to Laxington or the neighbourhood). But, lord bless us, look at the place *now* ! — All smoke, and filth, and noise : meetings here, and associations there ; and anti-this and anti-that societies in every ale-house, as if every-man-Jack were Lord Chancellor Brougham, and more ! And what better are we off, I should like to know, for all this tumult and vulgarity, than when poor, dear, good, old Lord Tottenham was so kind as to take the trouble of thinking and acting off our hands, by finding gentlemen to sit in parliament, and think and act *for* us ? I remember the time, when I could not so much as show my face in the High Street (my brother was agent *then*, and Recorder of the Borough), but off went the hats, and down dropped the curtsies, as if the folks were scared, or the queen herself passing. And now, ma’am, if you’ll believe me, I can’t step over my threshold, without being shouldered by a parcel of unmanly fellows, who have made their appearance here, no one knows why, from no one knows where ! What would the late good Doctor have said, my dear Mrs. M.,

could he have fancied that, when he was dead and gone, his cousin Burtonshaw would buy out the lawful possessors of Laxington, and help to turn the place topsy-turvy!"

"Every black has its white," replied the ancient dame, not quite insensible to the glory of counting kinswomanship with the most considerable landed-proprietor in the neighbourhood. "The town may not be quite so quiet and genteel as it used. But, not being by habit a street-tramper, I have little fault to find on that score. For *my* part, I like to see the ranges of new buildings on the Weald Road, rising so neat and regular, with their comfortable bits of gardens, and slated roofs. As one never hears of the poor wanting employment *now*, there is something in the sound of the factory-bell that gladdens my ears."

"Give *me* the old dinner-bells of Stoke Park, and Everleigh Hall!" muttered Pen. "But *that* is music one shall never hear again! Nothing disturbs the Laxington meadows, now-a-days, but the rattle of the paper-mills!"

"And then the market," interrupted Mrs. Mangles. "What a noble show of provisions! No favour *now* in a joint of house-lamb from Weald Park. Laxington has luxuries of its own. I'm told that in the permanent library which Mr. Burtonshaw helped to set up, all the new publications are taken in—all the magazines and reviews."

"Magazines and reviews, indeed!" interrupted old Pen.; "a pack of inflammatory trash!—What leisure had we for books while the neighbourhood was any thing to call a neighbourhood?—unless, indeed, a Debrett's Peerage,—when a dispute arose among us which was eldest, Harry Tottenham or William,—or whereabouts my Lord Lancashire stood for precedence

among the Marquisses.—Mighty useful Debrett's Peerage would be in Laxington *now!*"

"I find from Mrs. Burtonshaw," interposed Mrs. Mangles, "that our old favourite, Mrs. Clarence Eardley, is coming to pass the holidays at Weald, before her husband sets off for his new mission."

"Mr. Clarence Eardley an ambassador?" groaned the indignant Pen.; "an ambassador, without as much beard on his chin as would make a camel's hair paint-brush! We were promised that, under a Reformed Parliament, promotion should go by merit; and here, forsooth, is my young master a Plenipo at once, because he happens to be son to a lord, and son-in-law to a Mr. Radical Burtonshaw."

"And one of the most rising young men of the day!" — added the old lady.

"Yes! they are *all* the most rising young men of the day, so long as they have minister-uncles who want to shove them into a place!" ejaculated Pen. "But ask Bernard Forbes what *he* thinks of Mr. Clarence Eardley's qualifications to represent the country at a foreign court."

"Mr. Forbes takes care not to put himself in the way of being asked idle questions by his neighbours," observed the widow Mangles, looking more than usually prim. "I, for one, have not seen the inside of the Manor House since the death of my late friend, the good old gentleman."

"We must make allowances, my dear ma'am," said Pen. snappishly. "It can't be very agreeable to the Forbeses to mix with the old-established No'thamptonshire families; knowing our opinion of that sad affair of their relatives, the Cadogans and Hamiltons."

But the venerable widow turned a deaf ear. Jem Riley had opened the quadrille table, and was busy

with a card-paper card-box, daubed in water-colours, some fifteen years before, by the juvenile hand of Miss Amelia Burtonshaw with wiry bunches of sea-weed, and a terrific group of shells and corals. The debate was accordingly adjourned to a more convenient season.

CHAP. LIII.

L'ingratitude des hommes, les rigueurs de la fortune, les dédains de l'opinion, vous ont fait de cuisantes blessures. Mais que le cœur d'une femme s'ouvre pour vous, il en sortira une baume qui viendra les guérir. — AUDIBERT.

THE newspapers had, for many months, announced the serious indisposition of Lord Laxington; and, for once, the intelligence they afforded was correct. His lordship's medical attendants, hopeless of recruiting the vigour of a frame exhausted by mental anxiety, yet unwilling to confess the insufficiency of their art, strenuously advised his removal to a warmer climate. “It was indispensable for his lordship to winter abroad.”

But what change of scene or climate was likely to renovate that weary flagging of the heart consequent on the disappointment of all its earthly hopes. The young have courage and energy to bear up against mortifications. But when the whole career of life has been run in vain, by one who, formed in the school of worldliness, does not easily learn to estimate at their real value the paltry prizes which allured him to the course, his struggles are great, bitter, and overcoming. Lord Laxington was conscious of the greatness of his fall,—the nothingness of his position. But he at-

tributed too much to want of address in his party, and want of vigilance in himself. He did not yet recognize the universal insignificance of poor, shivering, naked human nature, in presence of the decrees of Providence ;—the littleness of our utmost ambition,—the limitation of our loftiest capacities,—the feebleness of our grandest achievements. He had not become great through meekness,—noble through depression.—He was not penetrated with the fact that the world we live in is a world of probation ;—that the infinitely Great, the infinitely Happy, is still far, far remote ! —

The trivial changes of official life still interested his feelings. He could not check the bitterness that arose in his heart on observing the rapid promotion of public men whom he had despised as boys ; and whose political system he reviled as an attempt to indoctrinate the country. Mrs. Hamilton had sanguinely hoped that, on retiring into the country, he would cease to indulge in the expectation of erecting a new Temple of Power with materials themselves crumbling to decay :—cease to hunger and thirst after the things of this world ;—cease to walk in a vain shadow and disquiet himself in vain. Despising politics as a *trade*, (for as such *she* had seen them adopted and abused,) she could not forgive Lord Laxington for regarding the intrigues of party as symptoms of the condition of the country.

She did not even estimate with *sufficient* reverence the influence of a political administration upon the happiness and security of the people. As the deference of Europe for monarchy was fatally injured by the parodies of regal life exhibited in the creations of Napoleon, her respect for ministers was diminished by having figured behind the scenes in Downing Street.

While remembering, only too accurately, the conduct and conversation of the Baldoeks, Tottenhams, Leightons, and Vardens in the *déshabille* of private life (which had often tempted her to wonder in what portion of the state was lodged its legislative wisdom), she grieved that Lord Laxington should consume his strength in fretting over the failure of such and such a bill — the appointment of such and such a minister.

That his vehemence savoured of the infirmity of human nature and the lingering jealousies of official life, she had sufficient evidence in the fact that the merest underling of government was more the object of his spleen than her brother-in-law, who ranked among the opposers of ministers upon principles directly reversing his own. With Forbes, he *had* some patience; and seldom perused his name or that of Claneustace in the lists of the minority, without gracing them with some flattering comment. But this recognition of his weakness only augmented her regrets in observing the dying man so wedded to the prejudices of this world. But was this wonderful, when even Bernard Forbes had suffered himself to be so over-sanguine touching the progress of Reform, that he was as much surprised as grieved on discovering that much was, and must still remain, “rotten in the state of Denmark;” and that to cleanse the throne of the fungi engendered by the decay of monarchy, or even arrest the progress of dry-rot in its framework, might endanger the stability of the fabric.

That, in his time, no measure was likely to be established securing, on equitable grounds, the rights and enjoyments of the million, astonished him as much as though Nature had not in prospect as infinite a number of cycles as have already witnessed the mira-

cles of the great Creator; or as if the Almighty had not ever manifested his pleasure that the enlightenment of nations shall be as progressive as, at day-dawn, the enlightenment of the earth!

Meanwhile, the letters which occasionally reached Mayfield from Sir Edward Berkely, did not tend to cheer the spirits of the young widow. Some care, independent of her distresses, was evidently weighing on his mind. Nor was it till a visit from Lord Claneustace, during the recess, enabled her to interrogate him concerning the pursuits of his friend, that she learned a secret hitherto wholly unsuspected.

"Harry Hotspur is, I admit more petulant than usual," replied the Marquis to her cross-examination.
"But, then, Harry Hotspur is in love!"

"But that scarcely assigns a motive for his want of spirits," remonstrated Mrs. Hamilton. "I cannot fancy Edward an unsuccessful suitor; still less, that he should have fixed his affections unworthily."

"Not unworthily, but untowardly. What think you of the daughter of Lady Leighton?"

"*That* is indeed to be deeply regretted!" said Susan, with a rising colour. "Blanche is a charming creature,—gentle,—candid,—affectionate. But, such a mother!—Much as I love Blanche, I own I should shrink from a connection with Lady Leighton."

"You have nothing to fear. My friend Berkely, light-hearted as he appears, is firmer in his principles than most men. Ever since he detected the bent of his inclinations towards Miss Leighton, he has scrupulously avoided her; in which self-denial, by the way, he is the more praiseworthy, because the Leightons leave no means unattempted to secure him as a son-in-law."

"And yet," said Susan, musingly, "my brother's

position presents no great inducement to them in a wordly point of view. Edward's estates scarcely amount to two thousand a year; which, to a woman of Lady Leighton's habits, must appear a miserable pittance."

"Few people appreciate Lady Leighton's character," replied Claneustace, gravely. "Like other mothers, she would doubtless prefer for her daughter an establishment of a more brilliant kind. But from the moment she discovered poor Blanche's affections to be pledged, Berkely became her idol. Trembling for the happiness of her favourite child, she has endured from him the most mortifying slights, rather than relinquish her hopes; and my friend Mrs. Forbes admits her repugnance to the family vanquished by the patience and humility with which Lady Leighton has borne with her ungraciousness."

"Poor woman! You almost move me in her favour."

"Yes! even *you* would pity her, could you see how bitterly she suffers under her consciousness of Berkely's motives. She has too much discernment not to be aware what degraded ground she occupies in the estimation of the world; and that her character and conduct present an insuperable obstacle to the happiness of her daughter."

"Her punishment must be hard to bear!" said Mrs. Hamilton, compassionately. "She is a tender mother. I pity her with all my heart."

"Blanche, too, is sadly altered. Were such a sacrifice sufficient to remove Berkely's repugnance, I am persuaded Lady Leighton would consent to relinquish all further communication with her, after the marriage."

"Edward could not require a concession so unnatural!" cried Susan, with spirit. "What would be his prospects of happiness in a marriage, grounded

upon the breach of the first and holiest tie of human nature!"

"For which reason, he has renounced all connection with one whom he could not love if she ceased to love her mother; and whose mother he could not honestly welcome to his fireside. You, my dear Mrs. Hamilton, scarcely estimate the state of the case. Women are not aware in what terms Lady Leighton is spoken of among men. Nor could a man of honour and high temper, like Berkely, endure the consideration that his wife was, by inference, included in the disgrace of her mother."

"I see no chance of happiness for my brother," said Susan, mournfully, "still less for Blanche Leighton. And thus is the sentence of a jealous God fulfilled,—that the sins of the fathers shall be visited on the children."

"It was, perhaps, the emotion arising from Lord Claneustace's sudden arrival, which determined the crisis of Lord Laxington's infirmities; for, on the day following the Marquis's reappearance at Mayfield, a fainting fit, followed by alarming symptoms, rendered it necessary, in the opinion of the attending physicians, to warn him that his end was approaching.

"As far as is compatible with the guilt of human nature, I trust I am prepared," was his meek reply to those assembled by his bedside. "But do not let me leave you desolate, Susan,—my daughter,—my friend! Henceforward, reap the reward of your virtues. Live to be a happy wife,—a happy mother,—as you have been the best and tenderest of human creatures; and let my dying hand bestow upon Claneustace the sole recompense I have to offer for his unmerited affection. Do not," continued he, perceiving that she still hesitated,—"do not refuse to my last moments the only

consolation of which they are susceptible. Susan, Susan! — the duties I have neglected, the obligations I have outraged, rise up in dread array before me. Augment not their sum by the grievous feeling that I leave you poor and unprotected. Let me know that *your* happiness is secured ; and I shall be enabled to devote my whole thoughts to reliance upon the mercies of the Most High."

To resist such an appeal was impossible. Kneeling beside the expiring father of Augustus Hamilton, the gentle Susan yielded her hand to her faithful and disinterested lover ; and the first hours of their long-delayed engagement were dedicated to the solemn duties of a deathbed, and the gloom of funeral array. Lord Laxington's agony was long and afflicting. The paroxysms of delirium wrung from his lips the bitterest self-recrimination ; and seemed to bring before his eyes the menacing forms of his son, and graceless daughter, — with a thousand disconnected scenes of worldly folly and worldly error. — It was a relief to Claneustace when the distorted features at length relaxed into the vacancy of death ; and Susan permitted herself to be led away from a scene where her attendance was no longer available.

Lord Laxington had prepared himself for the great event, by a careful disposal of his worldly affairs ; and every precaution that kindness towards his survivors could suggest. To Susan, as to the bride of the opulent Claneustace, he bequeathed only such trifling personal memorials as tended to prove that she was the object dearest to his affections ; accompanied by such a testimonial to her excellence, as the conscientiousness of a deathbed rendered doubly affecting ; while to his ungrateful daughter he assigned the remnant of his worldly property, and the forgiveness of the father

she had deserted. He recommended that the union of Mrs. Hamilton and his ward should be solemnized without delay ; and directed, in the humblest spirit of Christian piety, that his remains might be interred in the most simple and unostentatious manner.

His wishes were obeyed. Sir Edward Berkely, for whom an express had been despatched immediately after Lord Laxington's fatal attack, arrived in time to follow him to the grave ; and, after a week's interval, had the satisfaction of bestowing upon his noble friend the hand of his beloved Susan.

She did not, however, lay aside her outward testimonies of respect to the memory of the newly dead.

" You have sought me in sadness and sorrow," murmured she to the happy Claneustace. " You have been all patience and kindness. I feel that these mourning weeds are the last tokens of sorrow I shall wear, and promise to impose no future tax upon your forbearance."

Nor had they proceeded far upon their bridal excursion into Italy, (recommended by Sir Edward as a change of scene highly desirable for his sister after the trials she had undergone,) when Susan so far recovered her cheerfulness as to enter with interest into the beauties of the scenery by which they were surrounded. Claneustace had the delight of perceiving that the treasures of her heart and mind were dimmed, rather than exhausted, by protracted sorrow ; and that she was prepared to enter with the warmest interest into the predilections of the husband who had so fondly devoted himself to the care of her future happiness. When they reached England, at the commencement of the following winter, not even the tenacious Sir Edward saw occasion to accuse her of indifference to his friend ; or of condemnable adherence to past recollec-

tions. At five-and-twenty, it was scarcely too late to begin a new career of prosperity and joy. At peace with herself and all around her, Susan appeared younger and lovelier than ever ; and, of all the presentations of the present reign, few have rivalled in brilliancy and interest that of the Marchioness of Claneustace.

But it is not in the favour of a court, it is not in her gorgeous mansion of St. James's Square, that she finds her meed of happiness. Deeply impressed with the elevation of her husband's character, she has made it her study to adopt pursuits congenial with his own. At Claneustace Court, where the larger portion of their life is passed, they are constantly together ; reading, riding, walking, planning improvements, visiting the happy tenantry committed to their charge, and adopting, in the legislation of their estate, the system suggested on a wider scale by Bernard Forbes, for the enlightenment of the country. The admirable administration of the Claneustace farms, factories, mines, and canals, is cited in parliament, and studied as a model by travellers of all nations ; and the Marchioness has not only her own happiness to attribute to the love and protection of her husband, but indulges in the joy of knowing the welfare of thousands to be secured by his interposition. On him, the holy precept of universal brotherhood has not been bestowed in vain.

The Forbeses are frequent visitors at Claneustace Court. Between Bernard and Susan, all unpleasant consciousness is banished by the cessation of her connection with the Hamiltons ; and she now beholds in him only the kindest of brother-in-laws and best of counsellors. Her endeavours are just now exerted to induce him to abandon the Manor, and accept the use of Mayfield (especially secured to herself by Clan-

eustace in her marriage settlements); for she cannot quite make up her mind to visit her sister at a spot within sight of Everleigh Hall and Weald Park, abounding in painful associations. But Bernard is too much attached to his family seat, and too sturdily independent in his principles, to incur the obligation; and he sometimes proposes to his sister-in-law to retain Mayfield for the honeymoon of Sir Edward and Blanche, when time or the death of Lady Leighton shall have released the young guardsman from his scruples of conscience.

“Ah! my dear Mrs. M.,” often exclaims Pen. Smith to the Ex-Vicaress of Laxington,—“I doubt whether you and I shall ever have an opportunity of congratulating our old favourite Miss Susan on her new honours;—my life on it, she never sets foot again in No’thamptonshire, poor dear!—And no wonder! To think how strangely things come about! To think that Augustus Hamilton’s pretty widow should be married, at last, to a staunch Whig, and poor dear, foolish, boastful Lady Berkely, not survive to see the day!—Why it might serve to console her in her coffin for being succeeded at Green’ak Cottage by Camomile the apothecary!—Well! times are sadly altered. But between the Marchioness of Claneustace’s marriage, and Bernard Forbes’s progress towards the Woolsack, we have, at least, the comfort of knowing that *some* spirit of gentility is still left in the neighbourhood of Laxington; in spite of the upstart Burtonshaw and his Reform Bill, and the downfal of THE HAMILTONS!”—

THE END.

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